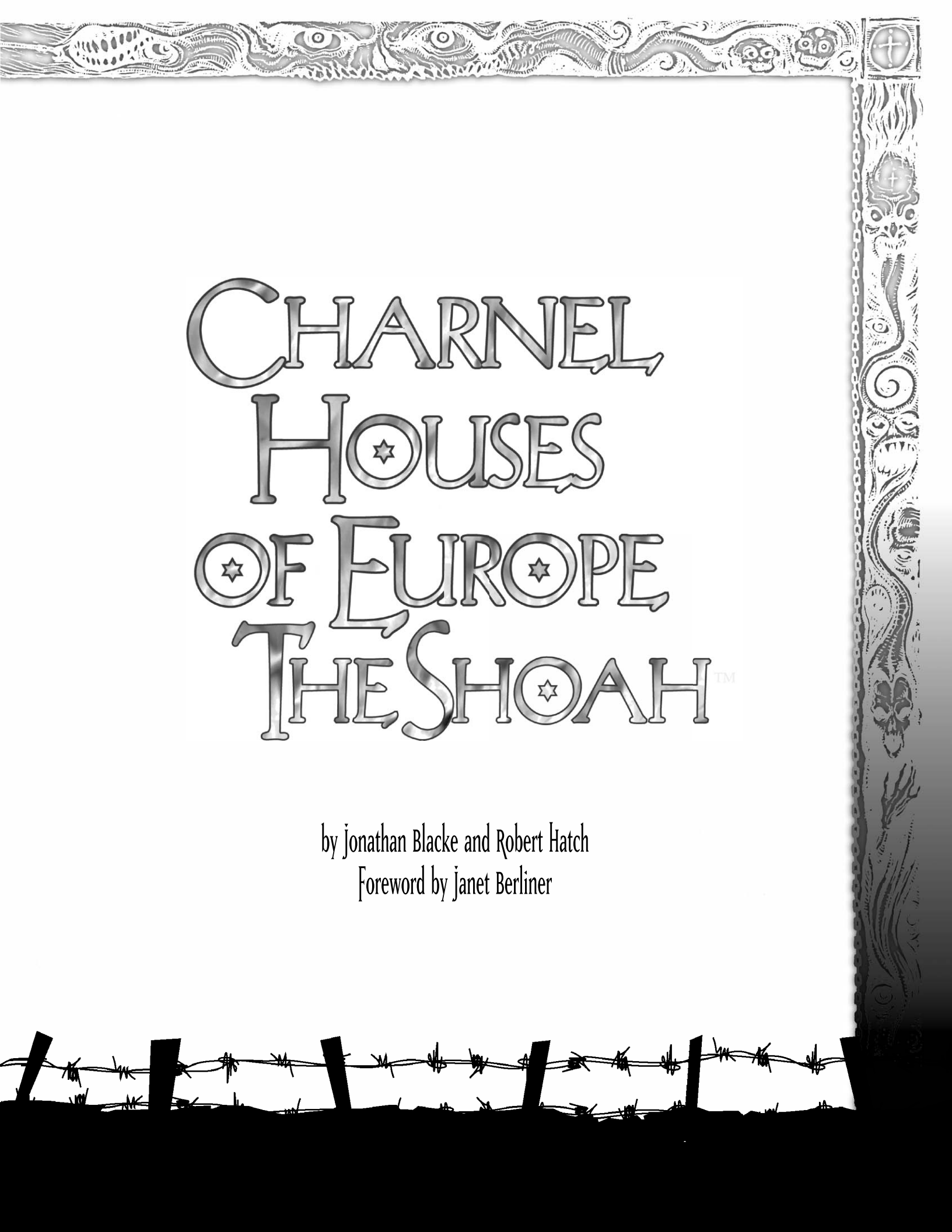


CHARNEL HOUSES OF EUROPE

THE SHOAH™

BLACK DOG
GAME FACTORY

A Black Dog Sourcebook on the Holocaust for Wraith: The Oblivion



CHARNEL HOUSES OF EUROPE THE SHOAH™

by Jonathan Blacke and Robert Hatch
Foreword by Janet Berliner



Never Again





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Apologies to George Guthridge, co-author of *Child of the Light*, *Child of the Journey*, and *Children of Dusk*.



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Art Spiegelman, creator of *Maus*, who demonstrated that it can be done.

And everyone else out there who ever gave a damn about what happened — you know who you are.


Dedication

This book is dedicated to the survivors of the Holocaust, who have spent 50 years telling their stories. What you hold in your hands is a tribute to their perseverance, and in some small way an attempt to carry on their legacy for the sake of the generations who will never know them.

Todah raba.

Charnel Houses of Europe: The Shoah is the second offering of **Wraith: The Oblivion** Sourcebooks under the Black Dog aegis. This book is to be sold to individuals 18 or older only.

The material contained within this book is intended for mature gamers only, and has the potential to offend or disturb. Please exercise discretion in the use of the material in **Charnel Houses of Europe**, as some people may find its content or subject matter to be objectionable. If you or your players cannot handle the intensity or subject matter of this book, please put it back on the shelf.

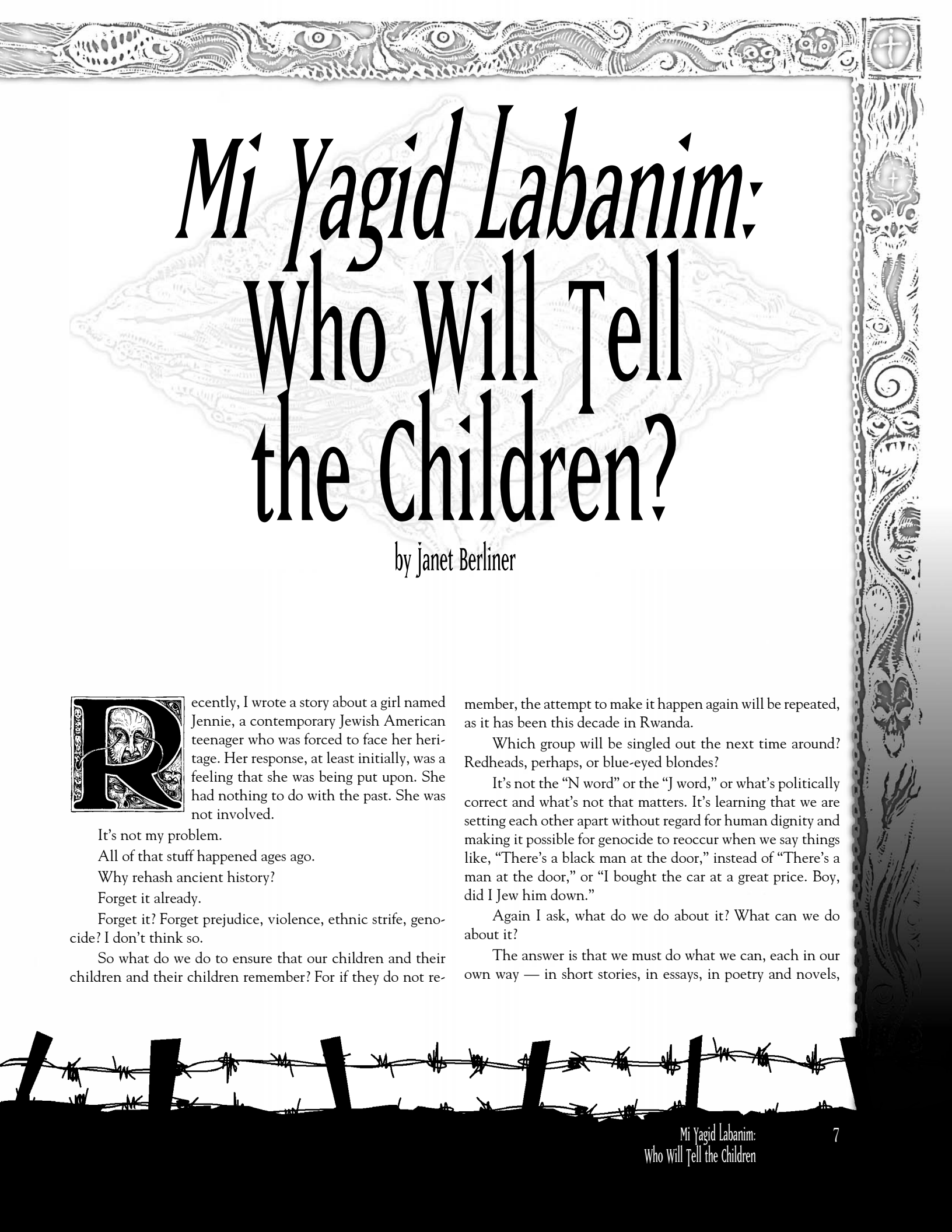


CHARNEL HOUSES OF EUROPE THE SHOAH™

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Mi Yagid Labanim: Who Will Tell the Children?

by Janet Berliner



Recently, I wrote a story about a girl named Jennie, a contemporary Jewish American teenager who was forced to face her heritage. Her response, at least initially, was a feeling that she was being put upon. She had nothing to do with the past. She was not involved.

It's not my problem.

All of that stuff happened ages ago.

Why rehash ancient history?

Forget it already.

Forget it? Forget prejudice, violence, ethnic strife, genocide? I don't think so.

So what do we do to ensure that our children and their children and their children remember? For if they do not re-

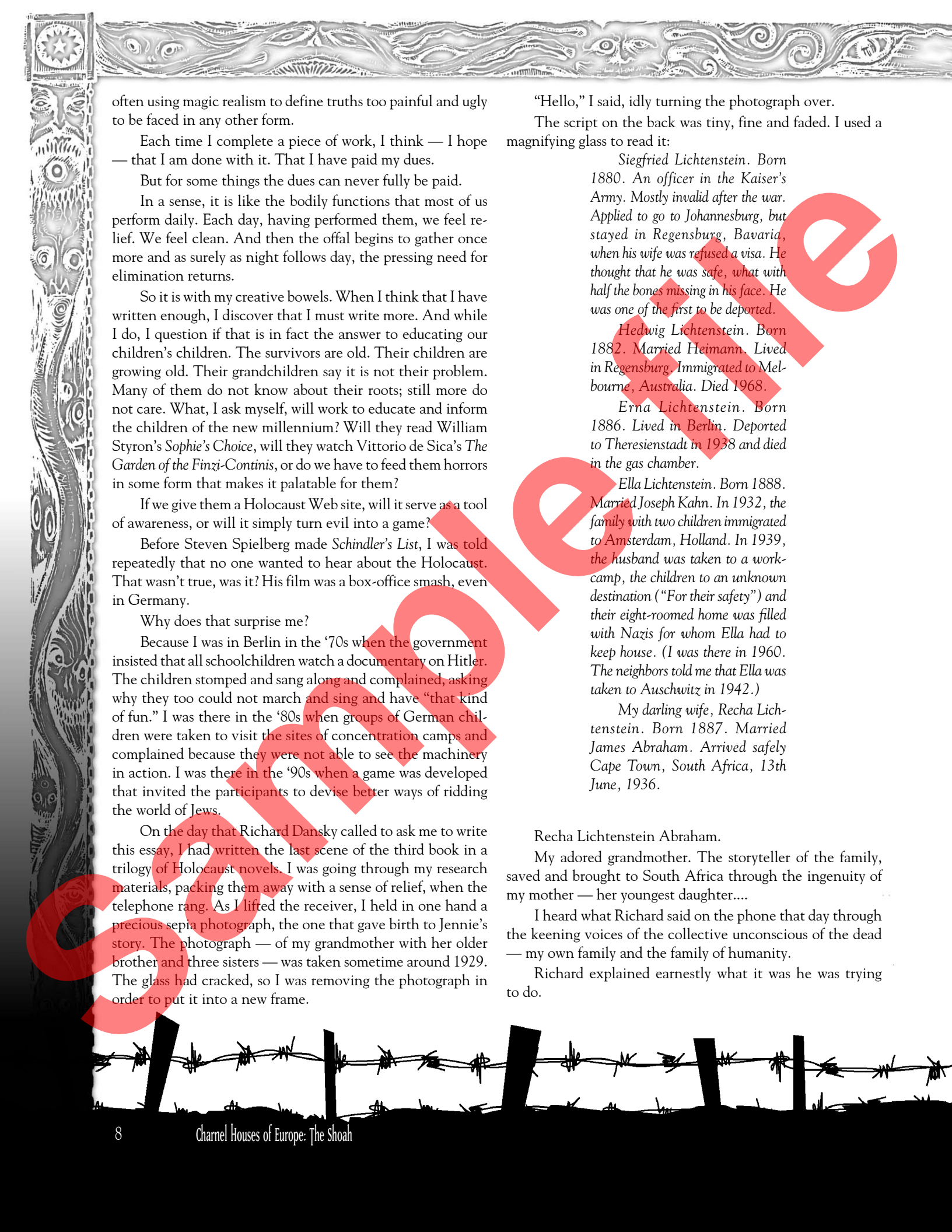
member, the attempt to make it happen again will be repeated, as it has been this decade in Rwanda.

Which group will be singled out the next time around? Redheads, perhaps, or blue-eyed blondes?

It's not the "N word" or the "J word," or what's politically correct and what's not that matters. It's learning that we are setting each other apart without regard for human dignity and making it possible for genocide to reoccur when we say things like, "There's a black man at the door," instead of "There's a man at the door," or "I bought the car at a great price. Boy, did I Jew him down."

Again I ask, what do we do about it? What can we do about it?

The answer is that we must do what we can, each in our own way — in short stories, in essays, in poetry and novels,



often using magic realism to define truths too painful and ugly to be faced in any other form.

Each time I complete a piece of work, I think — I hope — that I am done with it. That I have paid my dues.

But for some things the dues can never fully be paid.

In a sense, it is like the bodily functions that most of us perform daily. Each day, having performed them, we feel relief. We feel clean. And then the offal begins to gather once more and as surely as night follows day, the pressing need for elimination returns.

So it is with my creative bowels. When I think that I have written enough, I discover that I must write more. And while I do, I question if that is in fact the answer to educating our children's children. The survivors are old. Their children are growing old. Their grandchildren say it is not their problem. Many of them do not know about their roots; still more do not care. What, I ask myself, will work to educate and inform the children of the new millennium? Will they read William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*, will they watch Vittorio de Sica's *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, or do we have to feed them horrors in some form that makes it palatable for them?

If we give them a Holocaust Web site, will it serve as a tool of awareness, or will it simply turn evil into a game?

Before Steven Spielberg made *Schindler's List*, I was told repeatedly that no one wanted to hear about the Holocaust. That wasn't true, was it? His film was a box-office smash, even in Germany.

Why does that surprise me?

Because I was in Berlin in the '70s when the government insisted that all schoolchildren watch a documentary on Hitler. The children stomped and sang along and complained, asking why they too could not march and sing and have "that kind of fun." I was there in the '80s when groups of German children were taken to visit the sites of concentration camps and complained because they were not able to see the machinery in action. I was there in the '90s when a game was developed that invited the participants to devise better ways of ridding the world of Jews.

On the day that Richard Dansky called to ask me to write this essay, I had written the last scene of the third book in a trilogy of Holocaust novels. I was going through my research materials, packing them away with a sense of relief, when the telephone rang. As I lifted the receiver, I held in one hand a precious sepia photograph, the one that gave birth to Jennie's story. The photograph — of my grandmother with her older brother and three sisters — was taken sometime around 1929. The glass had cracked, so I was removing the photograph in order to put it into a new frame.

"Hello," I said, idly turning the photograph over.

The script on the back was tiny, fine and faded. I used a magnifying glass to read it:

Siegfried Lichtenstein. Born 1880. An officer in the Kaiser's Army. Mostly invalid after the war. Applied to go to Johannesburg, but stayed in Regensburg, Bavaria, when his wife was refused a visa. He thought that he was safe, what with half the bones missing in his face. He was one of the first to be deported.

Hedwig Lichtenstein. Born 1882. Married Heimann. Lived in Regensburg. Immigrated to Melbourne, Australia. Died 1968.

Erna Lichtenstein. Born 1886. Lived in Berlin. Deported to Theresienstadt in 1938 and died in the gas chamber.

Ella Lichtenstein. Born 1888. Married Joseph Kahn. In 1932, the family with two children immigrated to Amsterdam, Holland. In 1939, the husband was taken to a work-camp, the children to an unknown destination ("For their safety") and their eight-roomed home was filled with Nazis for whom Ella had to keep house. (I was there in 1960. The neighbors told me that Ella was taken to Auschwitz in 1942.)

My darling wife, Recha Lichtenstein. Born 1887. Married James Abraham. Arrived safely Cape Town, South Africa, 13th June, 1936.

Recha Lichtenstein Abraham.

My adored grandmother. The storyteller of the family, saved and brought to South Africa through the ingenuity of my mother — her youngest daughter....

I heard what Richard said on the phone that day through the keening voices of the collective unconscious of the dead — my own family and the family of humanity.

Richard explained earnestly what it was he was trying to do.

I started to argue, to say that the Holocaust was not a game, but a voice inside my head stopped me. *We must teach them through the tools with which they are comfortable*, it said. Once upon a time, I thought, there were bards and storytellers who passed on the words of the elders around campfires. Then came the era when the pen was mightier than the sword.

But there are few bards now, and as we approach the millennium, the pen diminishes in power.

While Richard waited patiently for my answer, I recalled a day I spent in Nice, in an old stone building overlooking the Mediterranean. As if it were happening again, I saw myself being handed a trust by my great-uncle, a Holocaust survivor who had nary an organ fully intact. Our conversation switched back and forth between six languages, only five of which I fully understood — something he did out of old habit from his concentration-camp days when such devices were some protection from eavesdroppers. He gave me a copy of *La Deportation*. The book was a compilation of black-and-white photographs which had recently been released from the French government's archives. They were stark and unembellished by text, snapshots taken by German guards and "technicians" in the camps and sent to their families to show them what their sons and brothers and fathers were doing during their work day.

"Take this to America," my great-uncle said. "Make them publish it."

I hand carried eight copies of that heavy book to the States.

For a year, I devoted myself to trying to get it reprinted here.

Every copy of the book was stolen from the publishers to whom I sent it.

The book was never reprinted here, nor do I have a copy today. My great-uncle is dead. But in my own mind's eye, those black-and-white photographs, taken with box cameras (the toys of that time) teach the full lesson of the atrocities of which humankind is capable of inflicting.

Remembering, I asked Richard to whom he wished me to address this essay.

"That's up to you," he said. "By whom do you wish most to be heard?"

"By the children," I said, picturing the Children's Memorial Garden at Yad Vashem. It was there, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, that I had the most profoundly moving experience of my life. "That is my greatest fear — that when my generation is gone, there will be no one left who will tell them the true history of humankind's darkest moment."

Seven years ago, I flew to Israel to meet Ilan Bar, my half-brother. He was 44; I had just turned 50. I arrived in Tel-Aviv as



Yom Kippur was coming to a close. Ilan did not have to identify himself; he looked exactly like my father — his father — had looked when I last saw him, right before his death.

I had only seen my father twice, once when I was five and again when I was 17. As for Ilan, I not only had never met him, but until a few weeks before that moment I did not even know that I had a brother.

Ilan is a guide. En route to his flat, he told me that he was leaving the following day to take a party of staunch Spanish Catholics on a three-day tour of Jerusalem. Though I speak no Spanish, they had agreed to allow me to come along. I toured the cobbled streets of the Old City, covered my head and arms to enter a mosque and rode a camel into the desert.

Then, together with three other brave souls, we drove toward Mount Herzl and the Holocaust Memorial known as Yad Vashem.

There is a circular underground structure at Yad Vashem, a memorial built by Abraham and Edita Spiegel of Beverly Hills in memory of their son Uziel, who perished in Auschwitz. It commemorates the one-and-a-half million Jewish children who perished in the Holocaust.

One-and-a-half million...1,500,000...children.

The memorial hall itself stands in darkness. It is built in much the same way as a Disneyland ride. You walk into

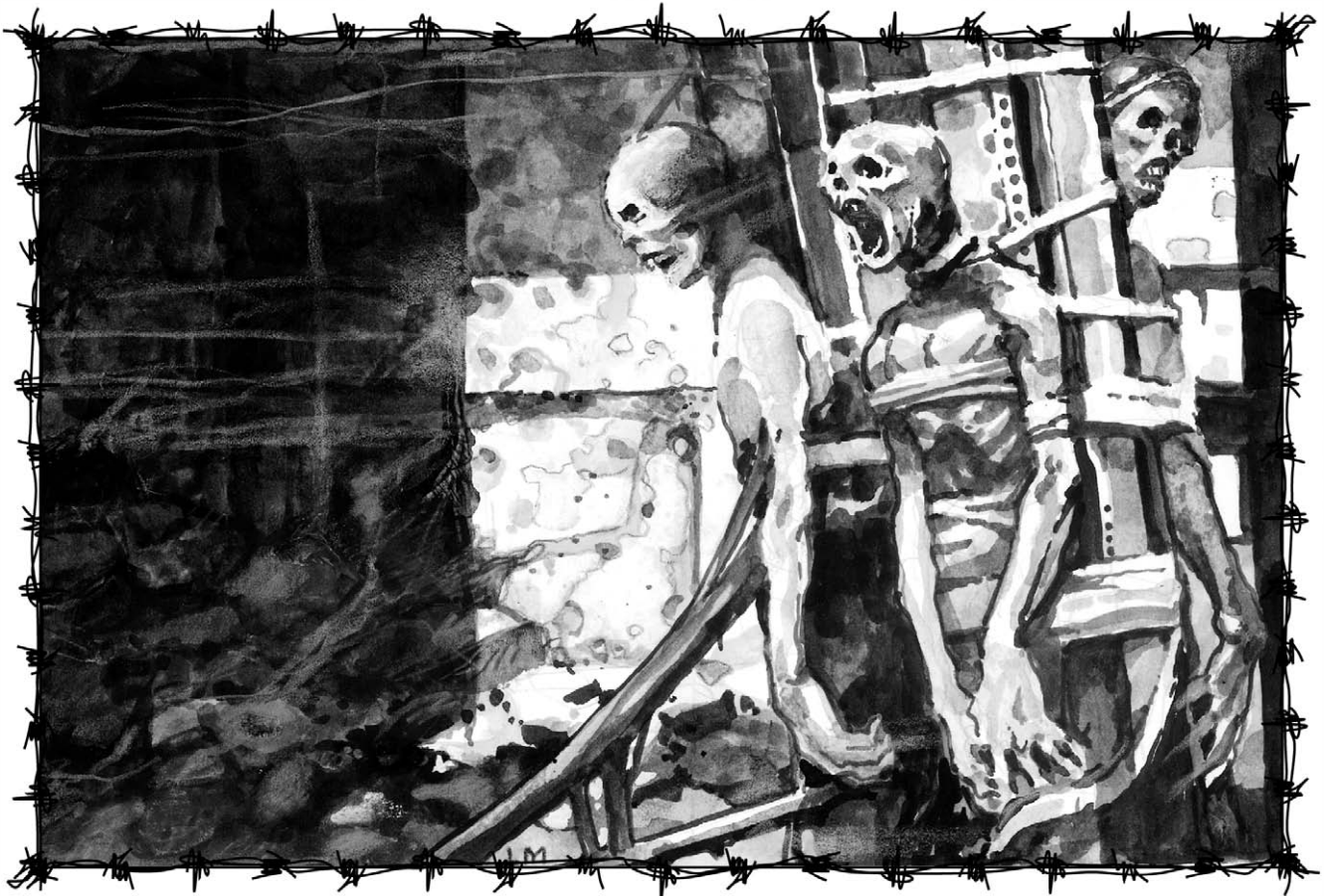
the darkness through a small anteroom in which three-dimensional photos of children are exhibited. A railing separates you from a circular floor. The walls and ceiling are a series of convoluted mirrors. Five burning memorial candles are multiplied into tens of millions of pinpricks of light, symbolizing the souls of children who perished. Softly the chant begins...a litany of their names forcing the weight of your body in a circle through the darkness and back out into the stark sunlight.

I knew then that even if I lived to be 1000 years old, I could not remove that experience from my consciousness. I wished that I could take each person in the world by the hand and lead them into that hall of lights.

Sadly, I cannot do that. So I try to do it with words.

From Israel I traveled to Berlin to visit my aged mother, who had returned there to work for *Die Mahnung* ("The Warning"), the newspaper arm of the League of the Persecuted of the Nazi Regime. Through them, the search for survivors continues, as does vigilance against anti-Semitism. This continuing campaign rests mostly in the hands of an incredible elderly woman, Dr. Rehfeld Waltraud, herself not a Jew, but a lifelong fighter against prejudice and racial injustice. In the newspaper's small offices in a prewar building on Mommsenstrasse, the battle against Who Cares and It Never Happened goes on.





Last week, my mother attended a religious service at the rebuilt temple in Oranienburg, near the first of the forced-labor camps. While she was at that service, here in the United States, where all races should be united against bigotry, Reverend Farrakahn was televised spewing hatred at the Jews.

In this manner, insanity and entertainment have become interchangeable. We can look at the program guides and choose to do any of the following: Watch the Disney Channel; Watch Discovery; Watch a murder trial; Hear David Duke address his hooded comrades about an all-white Christian America; See Farrakahn, surrounded by his uniformed guards, use rhetoric and mannerisms almost identical to Hitler's.

Those are the facts as I write this, from Las Vegas, where a few nights ago, I (a 5'2" weakling) told a 6'2" truck driver that

he would have to refrain from making racial slurs — in this case against Mexicans — or see me in the parking lot.

While my challenge stopped the man's mouth, the incident proved to me again that the battle against the worst of the human spirit is not over. And since that is so, it becomes clear what we must do. While we must not stop talking and writing and making films, we must also be brave enough to make acts of injustice accessible by way of the new mechanics...be it by way of the Internet and CD-ROM, tours of the Museum of Tolerance...or projects like this.

Read it and weep.

Read it and learn.

May it never happen again.

— Janet Berliner
Las Vegas, NV
October, 1996





Ghost Story: The Rusalka

by Robert Hatch

*Show yourself, my people. Emerge, reach out
From the miles-long, dense, deep ditches,
Covered with lime and burned, layer upon layer,
Rise up! Up! From the deepest, bottommost layer!
Come from Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz,
Come from Belzec, Ponari, from all the other camps,
With wide open eyes, frozen cries and soundless screams.
— Yitzhak Kacenelson, “The Song of the Murdered Jewish People”*



I think it was the Englishman Blackwood who best described the general region (though, of course, he was referring to the area south of here, along the banks of the Danube). I remember lying under the covers at night, heedless of Papa's disapproval, feeling the icy fingers under my cotton gown as I laboriously translated my 1913 edition of "The Willows."

Then I grew up, of course (though not so very much), and Papa and I both discovered what real horror was.

The place where I stand might have been conjured from the story's pages — meandering streams dissect stagnant ponds, clusters of reeds and matted roots. The air is heavy, weighted with the scent of rotting plants. Tiny fishes and marsh-snails are the only forms of animal life visible. The Vistula lies open beneath the late-afternoon heavens like a sturgeon's maw. I look at the gray clouds scudding across the reddening sky, remembering days not so very long ago. The sky was always red in those days, and there were gray clouds then, too, though they were of an altogether different composition.

If one looks closely, amid the reeds and the mire and the slime of the Vistula, one may still see a matching shade of gray — the tiniest of particles, countless flakes of ashy detritus eddying in the sullen flow, clotting on the plants. It is not mud,

not silt. "What happened here?" one might ask upon seeing this. What could it be?

It is almost time.


Here she comes, hurrying along the road to any of several villages north of Krakow. She wishes to reach a hostel before nightfall. The scooter is Japanese, brand new, a gift from Sweet Grandfather to his favorite grandchild. How unfortunate that the motor will fail, that she will be stranded in the bog. But such is the nature of machines.

Not so much to look at, is she? Shock of dirty-blond hair, wispy frame in denim jacket, wallet of zlotys exchanged for deutschmarks, Doc Martens, a Los Angeles Lakers backpack. Globally conscious citizen of a United Europe — may it last a thousand years. I am almost tempted to whistle Wagner.

It is the face, though, inscribed behind my eyes as indelibly as the number on my arm. Gender and time and generation have done their best to erase the traces, but the Nazis were right, in their way. Blood always wins. Blood tells the tale.

I watched her as she came to the camp. Germans do come, you know — Adenauer and Kohl and the rest have cultivated a social guilt bordering on voyeurism. I watched as she silently mouthed the words "ARBEIT MACHT FREI." I watched as she strolled down the lanes between the fences of rusting wire, the same lanes along which Sweet Grandfather conducted





the march of the skeletons, not so very long ago. And when she stopped at one particular photograph — when she turned those shrouded eyes away, ever so perceptibly, from the frozen stare of one particularly crooked stick-puppet — I received an almost orgasmic swell of pain.

Take those eyes, strip away the sunglasses and only two generations, add a film as palpable and miasmic as the gray scum at my feet, and Sweet Grandfather leers with a gaze like a scalpel, just as he did during the examinations, the *appel*, the injections, the selection.

Well, I have selected her. It is time.

Night drops out of the upper sky, conjoining with a sudden belch of stinking smoke. I writhe amid the coils of her scooter's engine, moving in the manner the Doppelganger taught me, and the vehicle sputters like the last gasp of an asphyxiating prisoner. Clouds of exhaust plume into the deepening air, like crematory ashes.

She pulls to the side, almost into the swamp itself, and a barrage of curses commingles with the splash of frogs and cries of ducks. She is resourceful; she lights a flare. It blazes red against the black sky, like flame from a crematory chimney. She shivers, and her curses gradually subside into cries for assistance.

No one hears her now, just as no one heard us then. The road less traveled, the starkly picturesque road she found so enticing — the consequence is that no one will come. My hive-brethren gladly enforce this particular taboo. They, too, are voyeurs. They want to watch.

I hover over the center of one very special pool, and the gray film coagulates, entwines itself into a ropy strand. It snakes out of the water, a lumpy tendril wrapping like mummy linen

around my nothingness. Once again I totter over Skinlands soil, grin, and flex choking fingers.

I step forward, oozing through the reeds.

"Who is there?" she calls in broken Polish.

I come for her, all wet and charred and carpeted with weeds. The flare illuminates my welcoming smile.

There is a legend in the East — the tale of the *rusalka*, the drowned maiden of the river. The Vistula did not claim me until after I was ashes, but Zyklon B proved an acceptable substitute.

The legends called the *rusalka* beautiful. The tale-spinners must never have seen a drowning victim. They certainly never witnessed the aftereffects of Zyklon B — the bloated, blue, bloody faces, the purpled lips disgorging blackened tongues. No, I am not beautiful.

Oh, the poor child! Can she not understand that her palpitating heart, the screams tearing their way from her gut — these things only strengthen me? I tighten the ashes around my hate like a marsh-snail armoring itself in its shell.

I can see the deathmark tattooed on her face — already she turns cold, still, blue.

As I gain on her and scabble at her fleeing back, my Psyche feebly whispers this thought: *Was she of an age with me, when I went up the chimney?* Then I am on her, and there are no more doubts; there are only my talons, her throat, the tempest of hate and ashes sucking us down into the Vistula mire.

And there amid the ooze stare Grandfather's eyes, those scalpel eyes, now caked with confusion. The child understands none of this, unaware of why she is dying.

Well, who among us understood?



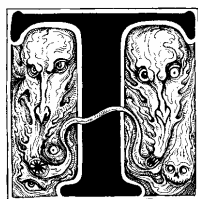


MacDougall



Introduction

What Is This Book?



This book is an attempt to do something different with the power of storytelling. In these pages is a history and a series of stories, detailing things that did happen and what their effects might have been in the World of Darkness. The idea is not to trivialize the Holocaust, to reduce it to the level of “just a game.” Rather, the concept behind this book is to use the medium of roleplaying as another way to tell the story of the Shoah, the story that must constantly be told.

The words of this book are not intended to be fun to read. If you are looking for the opportunity to Skinride Colonel Klink and Sergeant Schulz and change the course of history, you’ve picked up the wrong text. Rather, **Charnel Houses** is intended as an examination of consequences. What could such horrible suffering produce in the Shadowlands, were the Shadowlands real? What heights of heroism — and depths of

villainy — might these events produce in the souls of the dead? **Wraith** is about unfinished business and passion, and surely the 12 million souls who died in the events of the Shoah had much that they left unfinished.

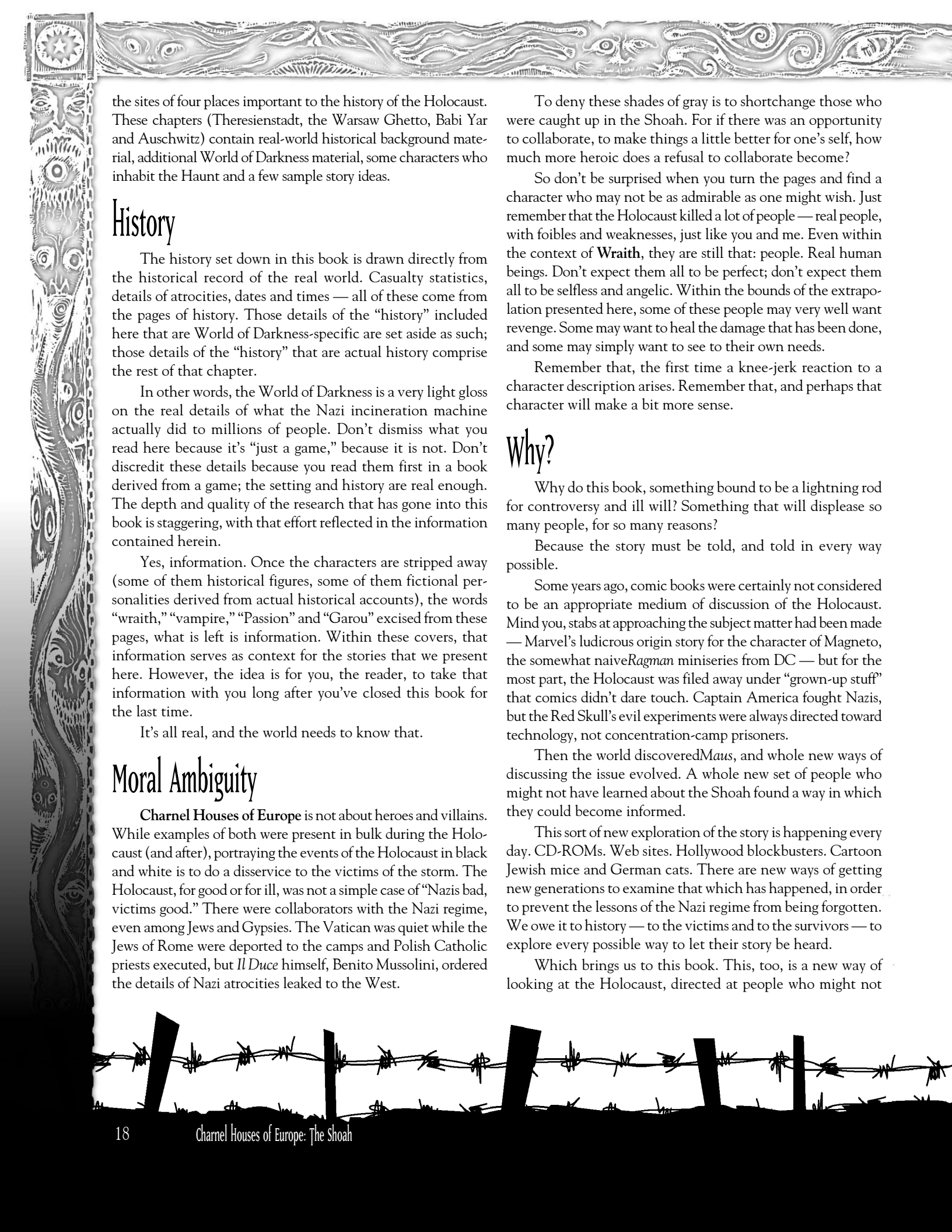
After all is said and done, the Holocaust was and is a purely human tragedy. This book does not attempt to move the blame from where it belongs. The vampires and wraiths didn’t make anyone do it. The Garou and the mages didn’t manipulate events behind the scenes to create the Shoah. In the context of the World of Darkness, some supernatural beings took advantage of (or perished in) the atrocities, but first, last and always, the World of Darkness’ Holocaust was the idea and the work of human beings.

Just like in the real world.

Contents

This book is separated into five chapters. The first is a history of the actual events of the Holocaust, with additional text indicating the consequences of these events on the rest of the World of Darkness. The remaining four chapters are settings, Haunts set on





the sites of four places important to the history of the Holocaust. These chapters (Theresienstadt, the Warsaw Ghetto, Babi Yar and Auschwitz) contain real-world historical background material, additional World of Darkness material, some characters who inhabit the Haunt and a few sample story ideas.

History

The history set down in this book is drawn directly from the historical record of the real world. Casualty statistics, details of atrocities, dates and times — all of these come from the pages of history. Those details of the “history” included here that are World of Darkness-specific are set aside as such; those details of the “history” that are actual history comprise the rest of that chapter.

In other words, the World of Darkness is a very light gloss on the real details of what the Nazi incineration machine actually did to millions of people. Don’t dismiss what you read here because it’s “just a game,” because it is not. Don’t discredit these details because you read them first in a book derived from a game; the setting and history are real enough. The depth and quality of the research that has gone into this book is staggering, with that effort reflected in the information contained herein.

Yes, information. Once the characters are stripped away (some of them historical figures, some of them fictional personalities derived from actual historical accounts), the words “wraith,” “vampire,” “Passion” and “Garou” excised from these pages, what is left is information. Within these covers, that information serves as context for the stories that we present here. However, the idea is for you, the reader, to take that information with you long after you’ve closed this book for the last time.

It’s all real, and the world needs to know that.

Moral Ambiguity

Charnel Houses of Europe is not about heroes and villains. While examples of both were present in bulk during the Holocaust (and after), portraying the events of the Holocaust in black and white is to do a disservice to the victims of the storm. The Holocaust, for good or for ill, was not a simple case of “Nazis bad, victims good.” There were collaborators with the Nazi regime, even among Jews and Gypsies. The Vatican was quiet while the Jews of Rome were deported to the camps and Polish Catholic priests executed, but *Il Duce* himself, Benito Mussolini, ordered the details of Nazi atrocities leaked to the West.

To deny these shades of gray is to shortchange those who were caught up in the Shoah. For if there was an opportunity to collaborate, to make things a little better for one’s self, how much more heroic does a refusal to collaborate become?

So don’t be surprised when you turn the pages and find a character who may not be as admirable as one might wish. Just remember that the Holocaust killed a lot of people — real people, with foibles and weaknesses, just like you and me. Even within the context of **Wraith**, they are still that: people. Real human beings. Don’t expect them all to be perfect; don’t expect them all to be selfless and angelic. Within the bounds of the extrapolation presented here, some of these people may very well want revenge. Some may want to heal the damage that has been done, and some may simply want to see to their own needs.

Remember that, the first time a knee-jerk reaction to a character description arises. Remember that, and perhaps that character will make a bit more sense.

Why?

Why do this book, something bound to be a lightning rod for controversy and ill will? Something that will displease so many people, for so many reasons?

Because the story must be told, and told in every way possible.

Some years ago, comic books were certainly not considered to be an appropriate medium of discussion of the Holocaust. Mind you, stabs at approaching the subject matter had been made — Marvel’s ludicrous origin story for the character of Magneto, the somewhat naive *Ragman* miniseries from DC — but for the most part, the Holocaust was filed away under “grown-up stuff” that comics didn’t dare touch. Captain America fought Nazis, but the Red Skull’s evil experiments were always directed toward technology, not concentration-camp prisoners.

Then the world discovered *Maus*, and whole new ways of discussing the issue evolved. A whole new set of people who might not have learned about the Shoah found a way in which they could become informed.

This sort of new exploration of the story is happening every day. CD-ROMs. Web sites. Hollywood blockbusters. Cartoon Jewish mice and German cats. There are new ways of getting new generations to examine that which has happened, in order to prevent the lessons of the Nazi regime from being forgotten. We owe it to history — to the victims and to the survivors — to explore every possible way to let their story be heard.

Which brings us to this book. This, too, is a new way of looking at the Holocaust, directed at people who might not

otherwise find a way to make those stories speak to them. In some ways, roleplaying the aftermath of the Holocaust might be a little more intense than clicking through a Web site. In some ways, daring to put the events of the Holocaust in the context of a game might be seen as sacrilegious or insulting.

Charnel Houses of Europe: The Shoah is intended as a way for roleplayers to learn and then to tell some of the stories of the Holocaust. It is a way for them to come face to face with the unique horrors visited upon millions and millions of people for no good reason.

And just maybe, enough of the horror and terror of the camps will find a home in the people who use these settings for their stories. They will take that burden with them when they leave their **Wraith** sessions, and because they've found a way to understand (even a little bit) what happened, they will find themselves working that much harder to make certain that it never, ever happens again.

That's why.

Recommended Reading and Viewing

Movies



inema on the Holocaust is relatively rare, though in recent years Nazis have become chic villains once again. However, there have been some movies made — some fictional, some documentaries — that make positive contributions to the debate on the events of the Shoah.

Au Revoir Les Enfants
Because of That War
Cabaret
The Diary of Anne Frank
Europa, Europa
The Garden of the Finzi-Continis
Hotel Terminus
Schindler's List
Shoah
Voyage of the Damned

Books

The list of literature produced on the Holocaust is nearly endless, thankfully so. Obviously, even on a subject as momentous as this, not every book extant is necessary, or even good. Below, however, are some of the books used in the creation of this one, as well as some of the seminal texts of Holocaust scholarship.

The Aftermath: Living with the Holocaust, by Aaron Hass
Against All Hope: Resistance in the Nazi Concentration Camps, by Hermann Langbein

Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America, by William Helmreich

Auschwitz: 1940-1945, by Kazimierz Smolen (translation by Route 66 Publishing, Ltd.)

Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account, by Dr. Miklos Nyiszli

Auschwitz: True Tales from a Grotesque Land, by Sara Nomberg-Przyk (Roslyn Hirsch, translator)

Before the Deluge, by Otto Friedrich

The Diary of a Young Girl, by Anne Frank

Death Dealer: The Memoirs of the SS Kommandant at Auschwitz, by Rudolph Höss (Steven Paskuly, translator)

Denying the Holocaust, by Deborah Lipstadt

The Encyclopaedia of the Holocaust

Endurance: Chronicles of Jewish Resistance, by Amnon Ajzensztadt

An Eye for an Eye, by John Sack

A History of the Holocaust, by Yehuda Bauer

Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust, by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen

The Holocaust, the French and the Jews, by Susan Zuccotti

The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy, by Martin Gilbert

The Indestructible Jews, by Max I. Dimont

The Jews of Warsaw, by Yisrael Gutman

Kabbalah, by Gershom Sholem

La Deportation, published by the French Government

Maus: A Survivor's Tale, by Art Spiegelman

Night, by Elie Wiesel

The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, by William A. Shirer
Shoah, by Claude Lanzmann

Survival in Auschwitz and The Drowned and the Saved, by Primo Levi

The Theory and Practice of Hell, by Eugen Kogon

Those Were the Days: The Holocaust as Seen by the Perpetrators and Bystanders, by Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen and Volker Riess

To Be a Jew, by Rabbi Hayim Halevy

Warrant for Genocide, by Norman Cohn



The Telling of the Agonies: A Chronicle of the Millions

by Jonathan Blacke

*You would tell the truth...And you know what would happen?...
They wouldn't believe you. They'd say you were crazy. Might even
put you in a madhouse. How can anyone believe this terrible busi-
ness — unless he has lived through it?*

— quoted by an SS corporal to prisoner Simon Wiesenthal,
near Lwow, Poland, 1944



From their moment of inception, from the instant the blade of mortality cut down its first victim, the Shadowlands have always been a dark and desperate place. They could be nothing else; every landscape is clouded in gloom, every building is frangible with rot and decay. Simply put, everyone a wraith meets and everything he comes in contact with is dead. And the dead keep coming, every single day — the victims of war and disease, abuse and despair and indifference. The grand old buildings fall out of favor with the world, fall apart, and are plowed over to make way for newer, slicker, more antiseptic structures. Only ghosts and memories appear in the Shadowlands, bearing themselves with a condemned air.

It seems academic, almost stupefyingly obvious, to call attention to these facts. Of course, many things are all too clear for every wraith. The power of emotion present in her Passions and Pathos, imbued in Fetters and barely controllable in Thorns, is always visible. So is the danger of Shadows and Spectres, and the authority of the Hierarchy. The Shadowlands are life's id, the smoked-glass lens through which all wraiths perceive the eternity that stretches out before them. Yet one thing is not always clearly visible to the average Stygian — the power of the living over the Shadowlands and the magnitude of influence which their actions have on the composition of the Land of the Dead.

The Shroud can be taken for granted by many, its thick stratum separating this world from the next like a leaden stage curtain. Solid, impressive and prohibitive, the barrier between Life and Death can often seem so impenetrable, so completely opaque that nothing




from the mortal plane could possibly breach it. But things do stab through: mundanities like Relics and Artifacts, and something greater in the form of anger and love, dream and belief. What does pass through the Shroud, both people and objects, always leaves an indelible print upon the Land of the Dead. And the circumstances under which people and places and ideas die and are regenerated in this gloomy place is the key to understanding the secrets of this world: how to exist, how to combat Oblivion, and how to find eternal peace. Hope is the key to that peace — and understanding the full complement of the human soul and how it acts in both life and in death, is the key to that hope.

During the last two decades of the first half of the 20th century, a crime was committed, a crime against a people, against humanity and against creation itself. It is known to history as the Holocaust. Its physical legacy is the deaths of nearly 12 million people: men, women and children, the aged and sick, Jews, Poles, Russians, Gypsies, Communists, Socialists, homosexuals, those with disabilities, those with the wrong color eyes, those with the wrong sort of grandparents and those whom a group of evil men and a society of cowards simply did not consider “useful.”

What follows is a chronicle of this crime, and how it has forever changed the face of Stygia and the Shadowlands. It is by no means meant to be a complete history. Rather, it is more of a chronicle of the human heart. It tells of the gashed, pustular, blackened side of the soul, of the evil that men can and will do. It also tells of the courage, hope and love that still courses through the souls of humanity, and of the determination of men and women that this dark part will never rise up again.

Come the Darkness: 1933-1937

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany by the country's President, the octogenarian Paul von Hindenburg. It was both a conciliatory gesture to Hitler and his new, popular National Socialist party and a calculated move on the part of the national cabinet. This august body believed that if Hitler was placed in a position of enough public exposure, he could be controlled by both the natural political process and the fickleness of public opinion.



It was a poor idea. Imbued with real political clout, Hitler and the Nazis began to eliminate their opposition, closing trade unions, burning books and incarcerating many of the Nazis' political enemies in specially built concentration camps. In March of 1933, barely a few weeks after Hitler took the oath as Chancellor, the first concentration camp was established, at Dachau. By the end of the year, 50 of these camps were in operation all over Germany, within the walls of which Nazi thug squads beat, tortured, ransomed and sometimes killed political prisoners outright.

Impure Thoughts

It was also during these first several months that the Nazi party began to introduce its delusionary ideas about a German "master race" into the fabric of its society. Pseudoscientific quackery abounded in "studies" about eye and hair color, nose and jaw width, all created in the quest for perfect "Aryan" specimens. Paranoid rhetoric about the dangers of "poisoning" German blood through intermarriage and simple social interaction with Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and the handicapped filtered throughout the collec-

tive mindset — ideas that simply echoed many others about social Darwinism that had been in place for over a half-century. The Nazi race-theorists simply took this concept to its "logical" conclusion.

This quackery became law in 1935 with the Nuremberg Laws, which defined certain groups within Germany — specifically Jews — as "inferior races" and subjected them to discrimination and the loss of civil rights. Jews were barred from the civil service, the medical and legal professions and university professorships. Jewish businesses were boycotted and their proprietors harassed daily by Nazi thugs. Many of the more prominent Jews were sent to concentration camps.

In the following months, persecution intensified. Laws were passed defining racial characteristics, essentially stating that it was illegal to fail to meet certain genetic criteria. Concentration camps began to fill with homosexuals, Gypsies and Jehovah's Witnesses (whose faith precluded them from swearing oaths to the state or serving in the military). Families were broken up, with children sent to special juvenile detention facilities and orphanages. To prevent "asocial" elements from breeding, Gypsies and the handicapped were soon subjected to involuntary



World of Darkness: Hidden Agendas

Much of the panoply of Nazi beliefs, including certain aspects of racial supremacy, grew from heavily mystical roots. Organizations such as the Thule Society, which was established just after World War I, preached and practiced a return to primitivism. Harkening back to legends and myths of Norse deities and Teutonic nature mythology, the Thule Society (which by this point had been infiltrated by several mages of the Verbena tradition) believed that a reversion to atavistic Teutonic culture and society (including the adoption of a runic alphabet, paganistic ceremonies for marriage, and other such activities) was the key to returning Germany to its rightful place of dominance in Europe. Many of the trappings of Thule Society belief were adopted wholesale by Heinrich Himmler and the SS, who considered themselves the direct descendants of this ancient Teutonic culture. Such espousals of this sort were not lost on certain groups within the World of Darkness; with the SS increasing in power within the Nazi party, certain groups saw the perfect opportunity to expand upon their own work and research under the Nazi umbrella.

Mages were especially active in this early period. Buoyed by the fledgling work of Nazi "racial scientists," members of certain groups in the Technocracy, particularly the Progenitors

and Iteration X, infiltrated government agencies instituted for the propagation of Aryan eugenics research, and they used the facilities to further their own work. Under the Nazi aegis, these mages provided support and modest clandestine funding for research, publication and even experiments. Although it is unclear whether any real influence on Nazi racial theories was exercised by these mages, it is certain that their encouragement of this ideology and technical assistance played a role in sustaining the drive and determination of Nazi scientists for as long as it did.

Another group that invigorated itself from the growing mysticism exhibited by certain factions within the Nazi party was the Sons of Tertullian, a society of mortals dedicated to the expulsion of wraiths from the Skinlands. The methods of the Sons focused primarily on the exorcism of supposedly "possessed" individuals and the eradication of those who claim to be able to communicate with the Shadowlands. Feeding on the propaganda against Gypsies and other undesirables, and utilizing the Nuremberg Laws as their legal justification, many Sons of Tertullian within the Nazi party were able to seize and imprison Gypsies in concentration camps. There, prolonged exorcisms were conducted on these unfortunates while they were under "interrogation." Few survived.



No Safe Havens

Despite their unwanted status, it was exceedingly difficult for Jews to emigrate from Nazi Germany during the 1930s. Many Jews had to rely on private Jewish welfare agencies simply to raise the required resources for emigration, as their own savings had already been seized by the Nazi government. The situation became critical after Germany's annexation of Austria in 1937, when reports of the dire straits many Jewish refugees found themselves in reached President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In response, he called for an international conference to solve the problem of the large numbers of Jewish emigrants.

Representatives from 33 nations convened at Evian, France in 1938 to address the matter. Many Jews were initially hopeful about the conference, as it was called at the request of the United States, whose poor track record on immigration was notorious. Observers believed that the gathering was going to be a turning point in American — and hopefully worldwide — immigration policies. Unfortunately, they were mistaken.

The Evian Conference became an insult to the Jews of Europe. The delegates in attendance were reassured by the State Department that no country would be bound to make significant changes in their immigration policies. Consequently, no nation did. After several days of discussion and debate, marked by much hemming and hawing,

it was clear that no country was willing to open its doors to Jews.

The reasons, if they can be called such, demonstrated a latent racism native to the countries in attendance. Great Britain admitted very few Jews, and effectively closed off its colony in Palestine to them as well. Canada would accept only farmers, thus leaving the urbanized Jews of Germany and Austria out of luck. Venezuela would not accept Jews, refusing to upset the country's "demographic equilibrium." Australia, in a rather frank statement of prejudice, stated that it "did not have a racial problem," and was "not desirous of getting one." Of all the countries at the conference, only the tiny Dominican Republic agreed to accept 100,000 Jews.

The United States finally agreed, for the first time, to rethink its immigration policy and accept large numbers of Jews. It also set up an Emergency Visitors' Visa Program to save distinguished Jewish writers, artists and scientists. Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, Sigmund Freud, Bertolt Brecht and many others were given refuge in America and Great Britain. Still, even more were turned away. In one celebrated example, 900 Jewish passengers aboard the German steamer *St. Louis* were refused admission to Cuba and the United States, and forced to return to Europe. Hundreds of these attempted émigrés would later perish in death camps.

sterilization procedures through both surgery and radiation. Men and women alike were violated by these procedures, ever after unable to conceive and give the gift of life to the world.

Sanctioned Hate: 1938-1939

As the 1930s drew to a close in Germany, it was clear that a growing, virulently anti-Semitic agenda was being adopted by the Nazi government. The initial boycotts and renunciation of Jewish rights under the Nuremberg Laws were only the beginning. Nazis forced many Jewish businesspeople to sell off their properties and livelihoods at bargain rates, or the Nazis simply used the Nuremberg Laws as justification for outright seizure. Segregation intensified, barring Jewish children from public schools and their parents from the theater, cinema, vacation resorts and even certain city streets. To get around many towns in Germany, Jews were forced to use large wooden bridges constructed along

the perimeters of major thoroughfares, walking above the cities of Germany along a demeaning skeleton of hate.

Arrests continued throughout the late 1930s. To escape this, many Jews in Germany and Nazi-occupied Austria attempted emigration. Where they would end up was not always certain, as the United States and many European nations were unwilling to accept large numbers of Jewish refugees. A number of Jews in Germany and Austria were able to get out, going wherever they could: Palestine, Latin America, even China. They also went to Poland, Hungary, Romania and other Eastern European countries — soon to be snared again by the encroaching Nazi dragnets at the beginning of the war. Despite the fact that they were obviously unwanted in Germany, significant numbers of Jews did not leave, either unwilling or unable to uproot themselves. Here they continued to suffer abuse and discrimination under the Nazi regime, or suffered deportation, giving up their savings and property to the Nazi government.

Broken Glass

In November 1938 the anti-Jewish agenda took a more violent turn. A young student in Paris, avenging his parents' deportation to Poland the month before, shot and killed an aide to the German ambassador in Paris. In response to this act, the Gestapo and the Criminal Police organized a massive pogrom on Jewish homes, businesses and meeting places. On November 9, 1938, this one night of destruction, called Kristallnacht ("The Night of Broken Glass"), was declared. A mutual effort of the Gestapo, the SS and Nazi party militants, the evening's terror succeeded in causing the destruction of over 7,500 shops and businesses. Thirty thousand people were arrested and immediately sent off to concentration camps, primarily Buchenwald. Ninety-one people were killed. Over 1000 synagogues were burned, including the one in the city of Essen, one of the finest examples of synagogue architecture in Germany.

The Dogs of War

At dawn on September 1, 1939, German tanks rolled across the Polish border. They took the country in less than a month, marking the beginning of World War II. It was a war for Lebensraum (living space), which, according to Hitler, Germany was in desperate need of. In their racial ideology, Hitler and the Nazis considered the Slavic peoples to be a subhuman species, fit only

for slave labor under the direction of the Aryan Germans. Upon securing control of Poland, the Nazi forces immediately began the first series of large-scale executions, massacring Polish university professors, writers, politicians, artists and other intellectuals who might be in positions to cause trouble. Catholic priests were also targeted; over 2000 were slaughtered by German soldiers.

Over the course of the next several months, the Nazis imprisoned thousands of Poles in concentration camps and forced labor details. Large segments of the population were driven off their land. Most of them were imprisoned, and their homes and farms forfeited to German families (who speedily moved into the vacant regions). Close to 50,000 Polish children, whom the Germans considered "Aryan" under the racial laws, were abducted from their parents and taken back to Germany. There they were adopted by German families and underwent assimilation into National Socialist society. Many of these children were later considered incapable of "Germanization" and sent to special children's concentration camps.

The House on Tiergarten Street

The purging of undesirables from the population continued back in Germany as well. While Panzer tanks were rolling over the Polish countryside, Hitler signed an order creating a special commission to begin a program of euthanasia on Germany's





World of Darkness: Taking Sides

Unlike previous conflicts on the European continent over mundane matters such as land or alliances, the Second World War led to a large rift between and among the various denizens of the World of Darkness. Observing the ideological underpinnings of National Socialist Germany, many of the supernaturals seized the opportunity to intensify their own secret wars against each other.

In Garou circles, most of the tribes pledged their support to the Allied powers. The largest schism was within the Get of Fenris, which separated into several splinter groups over policy in regard to the Nazis. A faction of the Get, believing in the salvation of Gaia through the annihilation of the children of the Weaver, sided with Hitler and his minions. These Nazi-aligned Lupines were a minority, but the damage done by the schism remains a wound still not completely healed.

Solidarity was not so easily found with mages. The Technocracy officially supported the National Socialists, whose views on social order and racial supremacy within Germany found mirrors in many of the Technocracy's basic tenets in regards to the organization of society. The Conventions' individual members were not so stolidly behind the official policy, however. Nearly half of those in attendance walked out of the Symposium where this statement was made. Views split along national lines, as camps within the Conventions disagreed with their brethren in Nazi territory, and eventually most Technomancers fought against the party line. The Council also split, siding many Verbenas and Sons of Ether who threw support toward Nazi mysticism and science against their Council-affiliated brethren.

The first echoes of the trauma that the war and the Holocaust would end up inflicting upon the Shadowlands and Stygia, however, were not immediately apparent to the Hierarchy. War had been declared against the Jade Emperor, and the bulk of Stygian resources was directed toward aiding the efforts to recapture Western souls from the coffers of Yu Huang. Mass

conscriptions of Legionnaires and any able-bodied wraiths to fight for the Hierarchy depleted the ranks of many Necropoli and other Stygian outposts.

The resulting strain on Stygian resources was felt immediately. Hierarchy Reapers found themselves overwhelmed with double and triple their old workloads as they attempted to garner numbers of harvested souls that matched the Deathlords' predictions and quotas. Many resorted to a perverse form of subcontracting their work, taking on unauthorized "apprentices" who were given a percentage of their "crops" in exchange for their assistance. Black markets sprang up, with many of these apprentices trading newly Reaped Enfants to fringe groups of Artificers for forging or Masquers as guinea pigs for their sculpting art, or simply for Pathos.

As a result, the initial victims of Nazi brutality, those who would die from abuse in Dachau and the many other camps, and those who were marred and killed under the butchery of surgeons' knives, fell through the cracks in the labyrinthine bureaucracy of Stygia. Although many other souls were also lost in the chaos of the "war effort," the Hierarchy was either unwilling or unable to take responsibility for any of the victims of Nazi hate, as the manner of their deaths raised many questions that no one wanted to answer. Half-hearted solutions were proposed; some wanted to offer them straight to the forge; others wanted to abandon them to the Tempest.

Eventually, to the detriment of all, the decision was made in the highest levels of the Hierarchy to ignore them, to disavow any knowledge of their existence. These wraiths were turned loose on the Shadowlands, without support or direction. Their fates are left to speculation. Some no doubt succumbed to Oblivion, some became Spectres, some turned Renegade or Heretic and some remained lost. There are always some from the ranks of the twelve million who periodically take it upon themselves to search for these wandering wraiths — a cause that is widely seen to be as lost as they are.

mentally and physically handicapped populations. It was called Operation T4, after the address of its headquarters at 4 Tiergartenstrasse, Berlin.

All state hospitals in Germany were ordered to provide confidential information on their patients to special boards of Nazi physicians, who would then review the records and decide, sight unseen, which patients were considered "useless" and should be

eliminated. Those men, women and children marked by the T4 reports were transferred to six private institutions in Germany and Austria, where they were executed by lethal injections or gasings in specially constructed underground chambers. The bodies were cremated in oversized ovens. This program of systematic elimination of the disabled would prove to be the precursor for the creation and operation of the death camps.



Simply Murder: 1940-1941

In February 1940, after securing their sector of Polish territory, the Nazis began a large-scale deportation to the east of all Jews remaining in Germany to concentration camps and "ghettos" in Polish cities and towns. Entire quarters of municipalities filled with uprooted Jewish families were walled up. Over three million Jews residing in Nazi-held lands were deported to hundreds of these ghettos in Poland and lands further east. Two of the more infamous ghettos, in the Polish cities of Warsaw and Lodz, received close to half a million Jewish deportees in 1940, before their walls were permanently sealed and their captive populations left to rot inside.

Other prisoners of the Germans flooded the already existing concentration camps, necessitating the creation of hundreds of new camps to handle the surge in the number of prisoners. After France, the Low Countries, Norway and Denmark fell to the German war machine, Nazi organizations such as the League of Night and Fog made periodic sweeps of cities and towns throughout Western Europe in the hunt for members of resistance groups and other anti-Nazi organiza-

tions. Sometimes these hunter cadres deported entire groups to a single camp en masse.

On June 22, 1941, the war took a significant step as the German army invaded the Soviet Union. By the end of the summer, the Nazis were approaching Moscow. Following in the advancing infantry's wake were the Einsatzgruppen, mobile SS squadrons whose sole purpose was to cut through the countryside of Eastern Europe, slaughtering as many Jews, Gypsies, Communists and opposition political leaders as possible. Invading towns and villages shortly after their occupation by German forces, these death squads simply rounded up all Jews, Gypsies, and Communists and drove them out of the town to secluded fields or ravines miles away. They made their prisoners undress, and then simply shot everyone there. The corpses were buried in mass pits, in many cases dug by the victims themselves.

Beginning of the End

In September 1941, 250 Polish prisoners and 600 Russian POWs residing in the Auschwitz concentration camp were gassed to death, the victims of an experimental method of



World of Darkness: Disorder

The upheaval in the Shadowlands that was the product of the War of the Dead gave new life to many of the fringe groups already extant within Stygian society. Renegades took advantage of the absence of any formidable opposition to step up attacks against Hierarchy bastions. Transports of souls from overworked Reapers were set upon and sabotaged, and their wraithly cargoes liberated. Renegades renewed sporadic fighting in Necropoli, as Anacreons could no longer maintain order with short-staffed patrols. New Renegade groups formed at an alarming pace, many of them consisting of recently arrived soldiers, resistance fighters and other insurgents who picked up where they had left off and renewed hostilities with their foes in the Shadowlands. Necropoli became dangerous places to walk the streets, and neither roads nor rails in the Shadowlands were free from roving gangs of saboteurs and thieves.

Heretic cults also multiplied, the explosion fueled by Nazi religious intolerance and the vast destruction caused by the war in the Skinlands. Catholics who perished in the Nazi sweep of Poland formed secret groups that were throwbacks to the Fishers of old. Ministers and other humanitarians who protested the terrors of the Nazi regime returned to speak out against the new enemy, the Hierarchy. The more apocalyptic-minded wraiths saw the Second World War as a final cleansing of the Land of the Quick, and formed Circles to await what they saw to be the final, encroaching End, the arrival of Oblivion.

execution. In December, at the Chelmino concentration camp, specially sealed vans that pumped carbon monoxide exhaust into their cargo holds were also tried as a means of mass execution, but with horrifying results — the vans were not completely sealed. When they opened the killing chambers, the Nazis found many half-dead and dying prisoners who had to be shot to end their suffering. The idea of mobile killing vans soon was discarded by the Nazis. The idea of mass slaughter was not.

Nothing Short of Hell: 1942-1945

In January 1942, in a villa in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee, a group of top Nazi officials met to find a way to permanently solve the “Jewish Question.” Specifically, these “experts” had gathered


World of Darkness: The Partition Accords

As the war continued and the souls of fallen soldiers on both sides continued to arrive at the receiving centers, the Shadowlands underwent some disturbing changes. Equitae and Grim Riders began to notice new Nihils opening up and Spectres appearing in sections of the Shadowlands that had previously been both stable and safe.

Rumors that another Maelstrom was building up flew throughout the Hierarchy. Some feared that the Labyrinth was becoming unstable, and that the war in the Skinlands was crumbling the barrier between Stygia and Oblivion. As speculations became wilder and wilder, further reports came in of new wraiths crossing the Shroud, souls with auras and appearances never before seen in the Shadowlands. Eyewitness accounts told of new Restless, some with strange Deathmarks, some with their Cauls half-hanging off their physical forms. These new wraiths journeyed to the nearest established Necropoli, seeking assistance from the Restless within, but found the attitude of many within Stygian society a cruel mirror of what had befallen them in the Skinlands. Most Anacreons refused to admit these tatterdemalion souls. Others took them for some new form of grotesques from the maw of Oblivion, and set Doomslayers on them. Most were simply denied entrance on principle. Some were physically chased out by what Legionnaires remained.

Many in the Shadowlands had crossed the Shroud with their old hates, fears and prejudices intact, and had little sympathy for the ghosts of Jews, Gypsies and other victims. More aid and tolerance was given even to the new Renegades and Heretics who dotted the landscape; old soldiers and freedom fighters commanded more respect. They, after all, had died fighting for a cause. What had these new wraiths done that demanded their respect? What purpose could they serve? What had they to offer? They were nothing but fuel for Oblivion, many worried.

to determine what the Nazi government planned to do with the millions of Jews still residing in Nazi-occupied lands throughout Europe. Chaired by Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Sicherheitsdienst police, this conference ended with plans for what was termed the “Final Solution” to the Jewish Question — the planned mass execution of the entirety of European Jewry. It formalized as official Nazi state policy the genocide of millions of people.



Soon after the eyewitness accounts reached the attention of the Deathlords, these new wraiths themselves appeared at the city gates of Stygia. They had been brought to the seat of power in the Shadowlands by numerous Ferry-men, who took them through the Tempest in safety. These lost souls demanded an audience with Charon and the Deathlords, and unimaginably, their request was granted. Popular wisdom is that the Ferry-men in attendance had something to do with Charon's unprecedented agreement to meet with these ragamuffins, but no one knows the truth.

Once all were assembled, the wraiths of the Shoah told Charon and his ministers the stories of their deaths, and the truth what was occurring in the Skinlands under cover of war.

Charon and the Deathlords were stunned into silence, though not for the reasons their accusers had hoped. If souls continued to pour in to the Shadowlands at the present rate, the Shroud would very likely weaken to an infinitesimal thickness. And if the barrier between the Quick and the Dead tore open near a Nihil...

Action clearly had to be taken, not only to preserve the structural integrity of the Shroud, but to deal satisfactorily with these new wraiths — especially in light of the Hierarchy's earlier cover-up. The powers of Stygia promised immediate action and housed the wraiths who had come to see them within the city. The Ferry-men retreated to the Tempest, and the inexorable wheels of bureaucracy began to grind.

Still preoccupied with his war against the Jade Empire, Charon was far too busy to deal with this matter himself. He entrusted these new wraiths to the care of the Deathlords. A meeting was called between the Deathlords and their most powerful Anacreons. Called the Tempest Conference, it drew up an agreement which was an attempt to deal both with the vast influx of these new wraiths and the possible problems this tidal wave of new souls might create. Of course, none of the wraiths who had actually died in the Holocaust was party to the negotiations; the occasional "expert witness" was called, and nothing more.

The agreement that the Deathlords and Anacreons finally reached was called the Partition Accords, and divided these new souls up equally among the seven Deathlords. Each

group of Holocaust wraiths was to be given their own ghetto within a major Necropolis. The wraiths were to be protected by the Deathlords themselves, under the administration of specially chosen Anacreons who would report directly to the individual Deathlords they served. It was agreed that these separate communities, called Partition communities, would be able to assimilate into Stygian society within their respective Necropoli, and they would have freedom from Heretic or Renegade molestation within Necropolis walls.

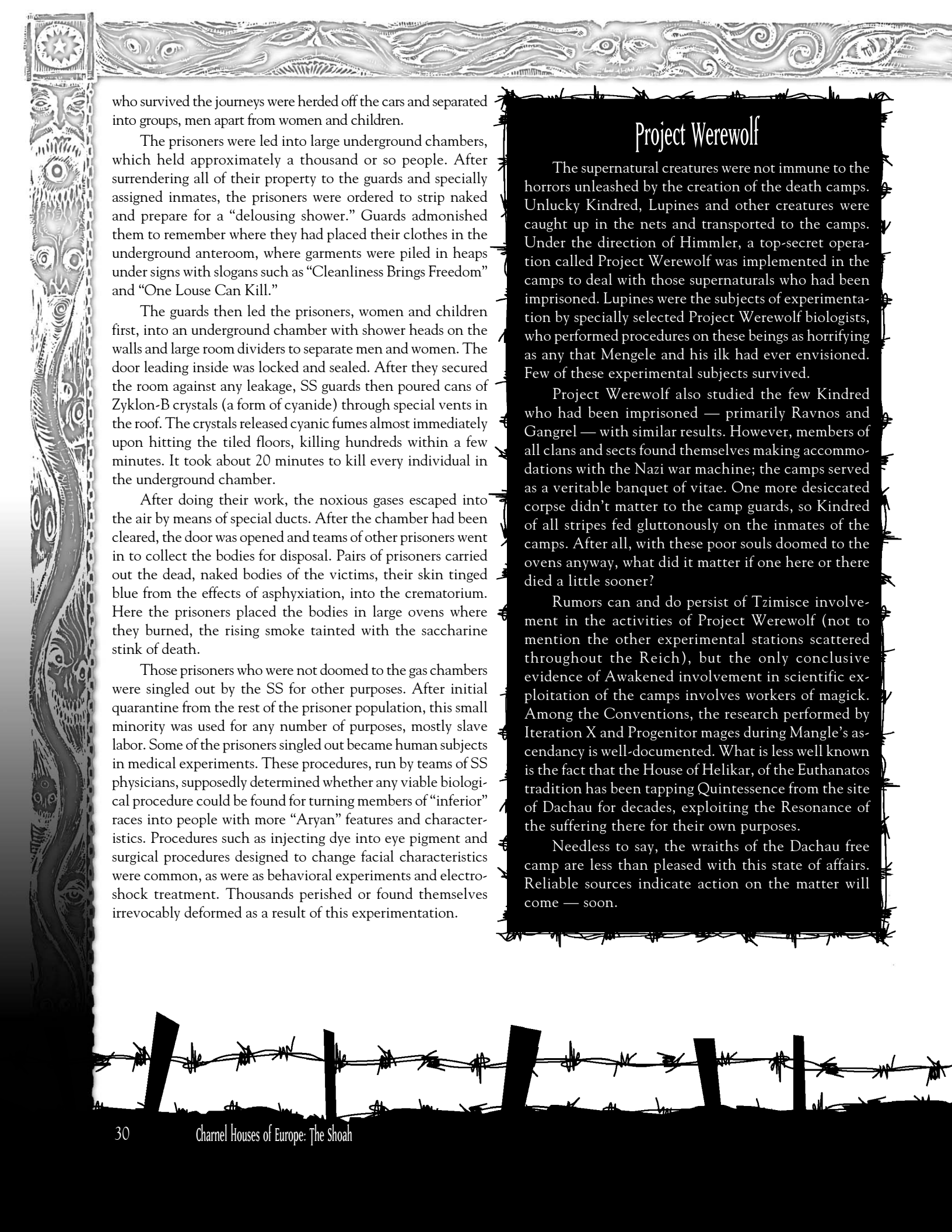
Furthermore, Legionnaires would be dispatched to the various important holocaust sites to attempt to stabilize the growth of Oblivion, as well as to meet and collect any more wraiths who might pass through the Shroud at these points. Small, elite bands of Equitae would be permitted to penetrate the Shroud (through Skinriding and other methods) in order to observe the activities in the Skinlands and determine where and when the Shroud's fabric might weaken. In return for these concessions, any wraith claiming the rights granted under the Accords would be obliged to provide information about the particulars of his or her passage through the Shroud if so requested by the Hierarchy.

The Deathlords and Anacreons patted themselves on the back at this juncture, feeling that the Partition Accords were the end of the problem. However, the combination of horrors in the Skinlands and political maneuvering within the Hierarchy soon decloyed these agreements. As the war and the Holocaust worsened, it became impossible for Legionnaires and Equitae to cope with the growing instability in the Shroud. Moreover, many of the Deathlords used the provisions in the Partition Accords for their own aggrandizement, shortchanging records of souls collected and even going so far as outright piracy of each other's transports. Overburdened Anacreons, facing growing pressure from their Necropolis populations, soon tired of giving these new wraiths special treatment, and slackened in their protection of these Partition communities. Such dishonorable behavior led to many of the Partition communities breaking up, as disillusioned wraiths left the Necropoli to make their own haunts elsewhere.

This plan, headed by SS captain Adolf Eichmann, outlined the construction of six camps in Eastern Europe which would become the sites for the mass execution of Jews, Gypsies and other undesirables. These camps, Chelmno, Sobibor, Majdanek, Treblinka, Belzec and Auschwitz, were constructed within the year. Sparing no expense, the regime equipped them with the facilities to kill hundreds, even thousands at a time.

Final Stops

In 1942, the six death camps began to operate. The SS initiated the process of emptying the ghettos of Poland, as well as Eastern and central Europe. They transported thousands of the condemned to the half-dozen death camps, sending them hundreds of miles in cramped, suffocating cattle cars. Those transportees



who survived the journeys were herded off the cars and separated into groups, men apart from women and children.

The prisoners were led into large underground chambers, which held approximately a thousand or so people. After surrendering all of their property to the guards and specially assigned inmates, the prisoners were ordered to strip naked and prepare for a “delousing shower.” Guards admonished them to remember where they had placed their clothes in the underground anteroom, where garments were piled in heaps under signs with slogans such as “Cleanliness Brings Freedom” and “One Louse Can Kill.”

The guards then led the prisoners, women and children first, into an underground chamber with shower heads on the walls and large room dividers to separate men and women. The door leading inside was locked and sealed. After they secured the room against any leakage, SS guards then poured cans of Zyklon-B crystals (a form of cyanide) through special vents in the roof. The crystals released cyanic fumes almost immediately upon hitting the tiled floors, killing hundreds within a few minutes. It took about 20 minutes to kill every individual in the underground chamber.

After doing their work, the noxious gases escaped into the air by means of special ducts. After the chamber had been cleared, the door was opened and teams of other prisoners went in to collect the bodies for disposal. Pairs of prisoners carried out the dead, naked bodies of the victims, their skin tinged blue from the effects of asphyxiation, into the crematorium. Here the prisoners placed the bodies in large ovens where they burned, the rising smoke tainted with the saccharine stink of death.

Those prisoners who were not doomed to the gas chambers were singled out by the SS for other purposes. After initial quarantine from the rest of the prisoner population, this small minority was used for any number of purposes, mostly slave labor. Some of the prisoners singled out became human subjects in medical experiments. These procedures, run by teams of SS physicians, supposedly determined whether any viable biological procedure could be found for turning members of “inferior” races into people with more “Aryan” features and characteristics. Procedures such as injecting dye into eye pigment and surgical procedures designed to change facial characteristics were common, as were as behavioral experiments and electroshock treatment. Thousands perished or found themselves irrevocably deformed as a result of this experimentation.

Project Werewolf

The supernatural creatures were not immune to the horrors unleashed by the creation of the death camps. Unlucky Kindred, Lupines and other creatures were caught up in the nets and transported to the camps. Under the direction of Himmler, a top-secret operation called Project Werewolf was implemented in the camps to deal with those supernaturals who had been imprisoned. Lupines were the subjects of experimentation by specially selected Project Werewolf biologists, who performed procedures on these beings as horrifying as any that Mengele and his ilk had ever envisioned. Few of these experimental subjects survived.

Project Werewolf also studied the few Kindred who had been imprisoned — primarily Ravnos and Gangrel — with similar results. However, members of all clans and sects found themselves making accommodations with the Nazi war machine; the camps served as a veritable banquet of vitae. One more desiccated corpse didn’t matter to the camp guards, so Kindred of all stripes fed gluttonously on the inmates of the camps. After all, with these poor souls doomed to the ovens anyway, what did it matter if one here or there died a little sooner?

Rumors can and do persist of Tzimisce involvement in the activities of Project Werewolf (not to mention the other experimental stations scattered throughout the Reich), but the only conclusive evidence of Awakened involvement in scientific exploitation of the camps involves workers of magick. Among the Conventions, the research performed by Iteration X and Progenitor mages during Mangle’s ascendancy is well-documented. What is less well known is the fact that the House of Helikar, of the Euthanatos tradition has been tapping Quintessence from the site of Dachau for decades, exploiting the Resonance of the suffering there for their own purposes.

Needless to say, the wraiths of the Dachau free camp are less than pleased with this state of affairs. Reliable sources indicate action on the matter will come — soon.



Fighting Back

Private men and women throughout Europe risked and often lost their lives in attempts to safeguard Jews from the Nazi roundup. Men such as Raoul Wallenberg, Oskar Schindler and Joop Westerweel personally saw to the safe transportation of thousands of Jews to neutral countries. Danish clergy and private citizens managed to save the entire population of Danish Jewry from the Nazis by hiding and transporting Jews out of the country to neutral Sweden. Where governments and diplomats could not help, many private individuals sheltered Jewish families in hideouts, basements and upper rooms.

While the death camps were operating nonstop, determined men and women fought an underground struggle in the face of insurmountable odds against Nazi oppression. Resistance movements were present in practically every camp and ghetto in Europe, and the year 1943 saw a series of revolts by Jewish and other prisoners against Nazi forces. In the Warsaw ghetto, from which Jews had been regularly deported to Treblinka, a group of young Jewish and Communist fighters hid the entire

population of the ghetto, close to 60,000 people, in bunkers and rose in revolt. For three days in April, the 700 or so fighters staved off attacks from over 2000 German soldiers backed up by tanks and artillery, with only a few dozen pistols and grenades. Resistance continued until the Germans finally overcame the fighters by burning down the ghetto building by building.

Despite the predictable failure of the uprising, the courage exhibited by the Warsaw group helped to inspire other revolts, most noticeably within two death camps. On October 14, 1943, a rebellion of the prisoners at the Sobibor death camp led to its closure. In August, a revolt by the prisoners at Treblinka destroyed much of the facility. As a result, the camp was shut down in November.

Destroying the Evidence

By late 1944 Germany had irrevocably lost the war. Allied forces were approaching from the west, riddling German cities and towns with heavy saturation bombing. Russian forces, having stopped the German advance at Stalingrad in 1942,



World of Darkness: The Army of Fire

Many of those who died fighting the Nazis in resistance groups never laid down the sword when they crossed into the Shadowlands. Vast numbers of former resistance fighters banded together as Renegades and searched the Shadowlands for fallen comrades — and enemies. Calling themselves the Army of Fire, these Renegades caused a great many headaches for many Anacreons, whom the Army of Fire accused of harboring former Nazis.

The Army of Fire also effectively brought an end to the Partition Accords. While searching the various Necropoli, these Renegades came upon the special Partition communities which had been created under the terms of the Accords. What the fighters saw were special sections of wraiths set apart from the rest of the Necropolis populace because of their indefinable status within Stygian society. It looked far too familiar.

The Army of Fire infiltrated these communities and cleaned them out, convincing an overwhelming majority of Partitioned wraiths to leave the Necropoli under their protection. The local Legionnaires usually outnumbered the Army's rag-tag brigades, but did nothing to stop them — many Hierarchs felt that the sooner the Shoah wraiths left their cities, the better. Thousands upon thousands of wraiths left the communities set aside for them and joined up with the Army of Fire, who led them into the Shadowlands to search for other of their brethren.

began pushing the Panzer divisions back and breaking into Nazi-occupied eastern Europe.

Fearful of having their atrocities discovered, the SS began a widespread evacuation of all death camps and concentration camps in the easternmost parts of occupied territories. They feverishly shipped thousands of starving and diseased prisoners west in trains and trucks and on foot, barely ahead of the advancing Russian forces. The evacuees were sent to concentration camps further west, where they were packed into already crowded living conditions. Starvation and epidemics of typhus and other diseases soon felled many thousands of prisoners in the western camps; never having been equipped to deal with such conditions, these concentration camps fostered conditions that made them death camps in their own right.

The SS tried to cover up their activities in the death camps before they were overtaken by the Russians, usually by attempting to destroy evidence of their execution facilities. After being evacuated, the death camp at Chelmno was razed to the ground and planted over with small trees several years old, in a vain attempt to fool anyone who later reported the existence of an extermination camp at the site.

Eventually the camps were liberated by Allied forces in late 1944 and early 1945. What the soldiers saw when they opened the camps beggared description: thoroughly emaciated prisoners clad in rags, their skin lesioned with disease and jaundiced with illness; piles of hundreds of corpses in half-dug burial pits rotting in the sun; makeshift crematoria still full of partially burned skeletons. General George Patton, visiting the camp at Buchenwald, physically vomited upon seeing the horrors uncovered. It was a nightmare made flesh, the detritus of humanity's worst impulses — the monstrous acts of devolved men living out their darkest hatred upon other human beings.

Punishing the Guilty

Scores of high-ranking Nazi party officials were captured by Allied forces in the waning days of the war. Many of the top Nazi brass chose suicide rather than face up to their deeds; Hitler, Goebbels and many others elected to take this route. Many of the Nazis whom the Red Army captured during the fall of Berlin were summarily shot; the Russian forces felt it the simplest route to take with those party officials taken into their custody.

In 1946, an international military tribunal comprised of the four victorious Allied powers convened at Nuremberg, Germany. The purpose of this tribunal was to try the highest-level Nazi officials in their custody for war crimes. Hermann Göring, Rudolf Hess, and several other members of the Nazi government were found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the attempted genocide of the Jewish populations of Europe. Most were sentenced to hang or to long terms of imprisonment; a select few, mostly economics ministers and the like, were found not guilty.

After the Nuremberg trials, the various Allied powers partitioned Germany into several occupied military districts. There the individual countries' military courts proceeded to try for war crimes those Nazi officials of lower ranks in their respective custodies. In these cases, imprisonment was the usual punishment; many of the defendants were considered too far down in the chain of events to warrant execution.

Real World: Nazi Hunters

The rounds of trials in Nuremberg and the Allied zones after the war by no means put the matter of punishment to an end. Hundreds of Nazi officials, former SS men and others, slipped through the Allied dragnets in the final weeks of the war and disappeared into the mists of history. Hiding in plain sight in German villages with the assistance of local collaborators, many of these criminals were re-assimilated into postwar German and Austrian society after the tribunals concluded. A secret organization created by the Nazis during the war, called ODESSA, was chiefly responsible for assisting SS and Gestapo men in escaping discovery and trial. Some of these former Nazis emigrated, primarily to South American countries where they were not subject to extradition. Some retreated into secluded villas to live the rest of their lives in peace and quiet. A few even came to hold postwar positions in municipal governments or on the boards of companies.

Yet many others refused to forget. People like Simon Wiesenthal were determined to seek out the truth, to find the murderers who had escaped Allied justice and to bring them to an accounting of their crimes. Working on the flimsiest of leads and testimonies, often at great personal risk to themselves, these hunters were able to track down and bring into the public eye men who had been SS commandants or guards at various concentration and extermination camps. The battle was long and frustrating. Many — the guilty, the innocent and the indifferent — had had enough of the war and its legacies, and wanted to put the terror of the Third

Reich behind them. Several captured former Nazis were found innocent, their cases overturned on technicalities. The occupying forces in the Allied zones had their hands full with other problems, and were reluctant to help. Local governments in German and Austrian states stonewalled Wiesenthal and his people at every turn.

Eichmann

The arrest and trial of Adolf Eichmann sent a shock wave throughout Germany. Simon Wiesenthal worked on locating the whereabouts of Eichmann throughout the 1950s. It finally became known to him that Eichmann had made his way to Argentina, where he resided under a false identity. A combination of Israeli agents and Wiesenthal's volunteers, unwilling to let the old Nazi escape punishment for his crimes, abducted Eichmann from Buenos Aires in 1960. In 1961, Eichmann went on trial in Jerusalem.

The former head of the death-camp system, the man given responsibility for carrying out the "Final Solution," was candid at his trial. He named names, places, dates and actions carried out by SS officials in death camps across eastern Europe. The trial of Adolf Eichmann caused a flurry of international emotion. A question were raised throughout Germany, by a younger generation who had never been exposed to the destruction of the war and the hatred of the Nazi regime:

What about those who got away?

Aftermath: The Shadowlands



At the end of the Second World War left Stygia and the Shadowlands in tatters. During the years of conflict, wayward souls reached the Shadowlands in unparalleled numbers. Haunts based in major battlefields and cities throughout Europe swelled in size and population. The great death-roads teemed with un-Reaped souls, many of whom fell victim to rampaging Spectres or became Spectres themselves. The breaking point in the Shadowlands came with the occurrence of the Fifth Great

Maelstrom, after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs. The Labyrinth cracked open and released the great Malfean Gorool, who failed to destroy Stygia because the apparent sacrifice of Charon himself.

After Charon's disappearance, the Deathlords scrambled to restore order to the Shadowlands. Anacreons, overburdened with the continual arrival of souls, found their facilities inadequate to deal with the sheer number of wraiths. Many souls, turned away from the gates of Necropoli, found themselves even more lost than they whereupon their first arrival in the Underworld. The major sites of destruction in the Skinlands had given rise to many more Nihils, and the already-weakened Stygian forces lost a good portion of their strength in the battles to stave off Spectral incursions.

And in the middle of the disorder in the Shadowlands walked the victims of the Holocaust. Vast numbers of Mortwights, created by Skinland ovens, wreaked havoc upon Necropoli and long-established Haunts. Angry wraiths attacked random trainloads of newly arrived souls, furiously searching for their Nazi murderers. And millions of wraiths pushed haphazardly together into their own little Circles, wandering the highways in directionless masses. They were accompanied by no Reapers, no Legionnaires, no Ferrymen — only by the acrid smell of burning. This stench was a massive, unmistakable Deathmark upon their numbers.

The Voice of Conscience


After some semblance of stability returned to Stygia, the Deathlords sent invitations to all known Circles of Holocaust victims, old Army of Fire battalions and Renegade pockets to meet at Charon's vacant palace, the Onyx Tower, to work toward a solution that would satisfactorily address the concerns of all of the victims of this secret war against the Jews, Gypsies, and other groups condemned to elimination by the Nazis. Thousands of wraiths who fell victim to the Nazi evil gathered in the most hallowed place in Stygia, the inner sanctum of the great Charon himself. The seven Deathlords, the Ladies of Fate, high-ranking Anacreons, Overlords and Marshals were in attendance, as were as the most powerful Stygian magistrates. In an unprecedented

move, the normally apolitical Ferrymen also made a strong presence. The stage was set for those assembled to make history.

The leaders of the Circles and Renegade pockets had come prepared and went straight on the offensive. They accused the assembled power structure of Stygia with the willful and willing neglect of the souls in their care. The Deathlords had horribly mismanaged the treatment of these wraiths and their fellows, and now reparations would be made.

By ignoring those wraiths who were the first victims of the Holocaust, the leaders stated, the Deathlords had denied the full care and support of the Hierarchy to souls in need. This willful neglect had very likely fed Oblivion as well. By attempting to palm off the growing numbers of the arriving victims on reluctant Anacreons by means of the toothless Partition Accords, the Deathlords and Anacreons had abandoned these wraiths to their own devices, and fueled the rage that had led to the creation of the Army of Fire —not to mention their attacks upon the various Necropoli. By underestimating the impact of the events in the Skinlands and the resulting physical effects upon the Underworld, the Deathlords and Anacreons had caused the loss of many victims' souls to the Nihils and roaming Spectres that had infested Europe. And by engaging in acts of piracy and fraud among themselves with regards to the collection of victims' souls, the Deathlords had treated





these vulnerable wraiths as nothing more than an inanimate commodity to line their own coffers with.

The spokespersons for the victims were indignant. They had witnessed the actions of the Hierarchy, and found no difference between the treatment of them and their fellow victims in death and the treatment of their living selves by the Nazis in life. According to the assembled wraiths, it was evident that by their own actions the Hierarchy was either unwilling or unable to successfully deal with them and their brethren.

The assembled members of the Hierarchy were nonplused by the accusations, partly because they were true. But mostly it was because of the single voice of solidarity that drove their accusers — here the Deathlords saw before them thousands of wraiths, all victims of the most heinous crime perpetrated on the human race. They represented millions upon millions of souls who were essentially unaccounted for in the Shadowlands. Circles, Renegades, Heretics and vagabonds all had come together to speak as one voice, a voice that bellowed forth from the depths of their collective being, a voice that cried out for help, for justice — for worth.

It was a voice that the Deathlords, insecure in their new authority, could not ignore.

The Covenant of the Millions

The product of the convocation in the Onyx Tower was an agreement providing for the establishment of a series of free ghettos for the wraiths who perished in the Holocaust. Called the Covenant of the Millions, it was signed by representatives of all those present — the Deathlords, the Ladies of Fate, the lost souls of the Shoah and the Ferryman.

Holocaust wraiths could establish free ghettos in the Shadowlands at sites of the major atrocities, where high levels of ambient Pathos were present. These camps would be connected to each other by the Shadowlands manifestations of the old rail-lines and highways which had connected death camps and execution sites during the war; the Allies had bombed most of this segment of the infrastructure straight into the Shadowlands.

The ghettos were total sanctuaries, where wraiths Fettered to them could make their own haunts and go about the arduous process of coming to terms with their deaths and the Shadowlands. There these wraiths could work to resolve their Passions, undaunted by outside distractions or interference. Also included in the Covenant was the right of the Shoah wraiths to the pursuit, capture and punishment of any and all former Nazi wraiths. By the letter of the Covenant, no one, not even the Deathlords, could stand in the way of this hunt for vengeance.

Stygia was prohibited from exercising any control or authority over the free camps. The Deathlords were to divest themselves of any interest in the populations of or goings-on within these camps. The Hierarchy was also not allowed access inside the camps, and any intruders on camp territory would find themselves beholden to the justice of the camps' inhabitants. The camp leaders were responsible to no authority but themselves and their charges. Total autonomy was to be guaranteed.

In return, the leaders of the free camps would search for and take in their fellow wraiths still wandering the Shadowlands. They would work to reunite families and communities. They would seek ways to close the Nihils that had cracked open at the sites of death camps and other places of mass murder. They would also, in accordance with the idea of reuniting of groups of victims, take it upon themselves to find those wraiths who had crossed the Shroud as Spectres, and search for ways to tear them from Oblivion's grasp.

The Covenant of the Millions proved to be a landmark event in the history of Stygia. For the first time since the treaties between Stygia and the Dark Kingdoms, the Hierarchy officially recognized a population of wraiths as independent of Stygian rule. The establishment of the several dozen free camps paved the way for the evolution of a totally separate society in the Shadowlands, the equivalent of a free empire of Necropoli coexisting with the ancient regime.

Life in the Ghettos

Although the several dozen free ghettos are equal in stature with each other, individual environments differ greatly from camp to camp. Depending upon the location and amounts of raw Pathos and Angst available, the societies and government of the individual ghettos are often very dissimilar.

Some of the largest ones, in places such as Auschwitz and the other extermination centers, are sinkholes of chaos. Perched over huge rifts in the tapestry of the Shadowlands, they teem with Spectres and dark emotion. The wraiths who haunt these sites spend as much time simply holding back the hordes of Oblivion as they do trying to resolve their own personal demons. Other ghettos are more stable in their design, and function as crossroads for the millions of victims of the Holocaust. These provide shelter and emotional succor for those wraiths who live within.

A number of the free ghettos are not "ghettos" in the true sense of the word, but rather areas of the Shadowlands where a Circle or group of Circles have become de facto wardens of vast reservoirs of Pathos. These places, which have usually formed from the emotion generated at scenes of mass Einsatzgruppen executions



Reactions

We are very proud of the treaty that we have signed today, and hope that it will serve as a step on the road to healing the great hurts that have been done. The other Deathlords' willful ignorance of this matter has been absolutely shameful, and we are glad to have had the opportunity to help set matters right.

— Jean Fouquet, spokesman for the Ashen Lady

Reaction to the signing of the Covenant of the Millions has been mixed throughout the Hierarchy. Many upper-level members of the Hierarchy, including some individual Deathlords, have always believed that they were railroaded into the agreement, the representatives of the Holocaust wraiths having taken advantage of the disorder present in the Empire after the War of the Dead and the disappearance of Charon to obtain massive concessions. It had been whispered that the Covenant sets a dangerous precedent, that it is a de facto legitimization of a society of Renegades or Heretics, and that it goes against the statutes laid down in the Dictum Mortuum. No one in the inner sanctums of Stygian power is foolhardy enough to break the terms of the Covenant overtly, but there are more than a few Anacreons and other Hierarchs who do not go out of their way to implement their side of the agreements expeditiously.

By rights, most of these souls are mine. I object in the strongest terms possible to this random appropriation of my — and my gracious friend the Skeletal Lord's — property. Someday, I promise, the scales will be balanced.

— The Smiling Lord

In practice, the main body of support for the free ghettos lies where it usually does in any complex and overpowering bureaucracy: at the lower levels, away from management, where it is still possible to get things done. Whether guided by idealism, empathy or revenge, there are many lower-level record keepers and administrators who maintain communication with and provide information to the leaders of the free ghettos. In addition, some Renegade groups share information with free communities in their regions (mostly for the pleasure they get in bucking the system), and can sometimes be persuaded to assist the ghetto wraiths in the search and capture of former Nazis within the corridors of the Hierarchy.

Is it enough? No. Did it come soon enough? No. Will any good come of this? I cannot tell.

But to do nothing would have been to condone this evil, and that we could no longer do.

— Datan Severus, Ferryman

or burials, are sparsely populated (if they are populated at all) in the Skinlands, and often serve as lodestones for Mortwights and other such creatures of Oblivion. The guardians of such Haunts, who are mostly groups of Renegades, patrol their charges resolutely. Wardens of these “undesirable” sites tend to occupy themselves with rescuing any of their fellow victims wandering through these parts of the Tempest and leading them to safer regions.


The labyrinthine bureaucracy of the Hierarchy is not present within the free camps; Stygian models are eschewed in favor of much looser forms of administration. The setup common to many camps features a sole leader, chosen from among the wraiths present, who has authority over a large main Circle or groups of smaller Circles of wraiths within the camp. This individual often also has the responsibility as serving as the camp's point man in any dealings with Stygia.

Depending upon the camp's size and complexity, the leader of a camp is often surrounded with a group of trusted wraiths, consisting of important members of the main Circle or individual leaders of the smaller Circles. These wraiths act as representatives of their own groups and advise the leader as to their constituents' particular agendas. Liaisons between the leader and their own charges, these counselors provide information to their constituencies and assist them in whatever way they can.

Information about the locations of other wraiths, Fetters, beneficial Relics and Artifacts, and sightings of Spectres travels constantly around the various camps. Couriers from among the rank and file are trusted with conveying information and ensuring safe passage for wraiths between Covenant sites, and many of the larger ghettos are often liberally sprinkled with these messengers. Complementing the work of these couriers, periodic convocations of the leaders are held to exchange data and brief those assembled on new developments.

In addition to the interaction among the various ghettos, the protocols contained in the Covenant of the Millions provide for each camp to receive, at periodic intervals, a single delegate from Stygia. Each delegate is received privately by each individual ghetto leader, who provides lists of missing wraiths and other news regarding the growth or recession of Oblivion in his or her area. In return, the delegate provides the camp leader with information regarding the whereabouts of wraiths or other individuals being sought by the population of the camp, and communicates any concerns of the Hierarchy to the camp leaders.

There are also groups of soldier, remnants of the old Army of Fire, who still patrol the relic rail lines between free camps. These wraiths, often with a subtle assist from nearby Ferryman, serve to protect wraiths moving from camp to camp from Spectral — and wraithly — interference. More than one instance of slavers attempting to hijack Shoah wraiths has been recorded; after the first few kidnappings the Holocaust wraiths fought back.



All the free ghettos have several common goals, the first of which is the safety of their own people. Safety for these wraiths is predicated upon the physical integrity of these camps, which hinges upon the memories and emotions of the Quick — those who survived the Holocaust and those of future generations who seek to learn the truth and guard against the recurrence of its sins. Both personal and collective action by those still living are a significant influence upon these communities in the Shadowlands. Many of the ghettos have suffered damage from attempts by those in the Skinlands to forget the terror, or erase the evidence or tamper with the truth of what happened. Each wave of denial by the Quick attacks the structure of the ghettos and results in manifestations of a physical nature. Walls fade away. Relics are lost. Wraiths themselves, stripped of any memory of their death in the land of the Quick, can suffer agonizing Harrowings and submit to Oblivion.

Positive action by the Quick, on the other hand, serves to strengthen the camps and their populations. Many of the Holocaust memorials that have been built within the half-century following the end of World War II have benefited the victims' wraiths — records of their deaths have been made public; exhibitions in museums and memorials displaying personal effects have saved many Fetters from destruction; and works of scholarship and art fuel Quick emotions and memories that have further solidified many of the communities in the Shadowlands. The free ghettos have endeavored to work through the Shroud to further these positive acts by the Quick. By tapping into the emotions that spiral upwards from the memorials and remembrances, they hope to provide enough collective energy for their own selves to resolve their Passions and pass from the Shadowlands to a better place.

In addition to ensuring their own safety, the wraiths living in these free ghettos have pledged themselves to locating the souls of the millions of victims of the Holocaust and bringing them into the fold. The idea of one vast community of souls bound together by their singular experiences of death is one of the prime movers behind everything that goes on under the free camps' aegis. The ghettos are constantly on the lookout for fellow victims of the Holocaust, lost souls traveling the darkened paths of the Tempest, hiding out in rarely visited Necropoli or attaching themselves to random packs of Guild wraiths or Heretics. They are also searching for those victims who have already fallen into Oblivion and been transformed into Spectres or other grotesques; many camps boast a group or Circle who have assumed the dangerous task of searching for these creatures and trying to aid them in achieving Redemption.

The wraiths who make up the Circles in the free camps sincerely believe that the damage done by the Holocaust can be repaired in the Shadowlands, but only with the strength and


The Role of the Ferrymen

The events surrounding the arrival of the Holocaust wraiths and the signing of the Covenant of the Millions mark the first time in centuries that the Ferrymen have stepped out from behind their arras of secrecy to play a significant role in the direction of the Shadowlands. Ferrymen made it possible to bring the first of these wraiths to the attention of Charon and the Deathlords, which led to the Partition Accords. Many Ferrymen were visibly active in aiding the Army of Fire when the Accords fell apart, guiding the Army's battalions to Partition communities and traveling the Byways of the Tempest to collect dispersed groups of Holocaust wraiths.

The exact motives of the Ferrymen have long been debated, particularly in the wake of what is seen to be decidedly partisan actions on behalf of the Holocaust wraiths. Theories are as numerous as the Ferrymen themselves. Some think that the Ferrymen, having always been outsiders in Stygian society, are acting out of an intangible connection to the indefinable status of the Holocaust wraiths. Others believe that the Ferrymen have become reactionaries, tired of the corruption and back room dealing of the Deathlords, and are on the verge of making a power play to oust the Deathlords from their seats of power. If this theory is correct, the free camps can be seen as the Ferrymen's first steps towards establishing an independent power base, and suddenly the aid rendered the Holocaust wraiths takes on chilling new proportions. The notion has cost more than one Deathlord a day's rest.

What no one seems to take at face value is the position of the Ferrymen themselves. The explanation any Ferryman gives (when one is lucky enough to find a Ferryman who will talk openly on the matter) is simple: They have always been bound by their Oath to safeguard human souls with every ounce of their being. Keeping that Oath does not end with simple combating of Spectres or ferrying souls safely across the Tempest. Instead, living up to that pledge is a matter of ensuring the freedom of any wraith to exist free from danger by any foe — be it a Spectre from the Labyrinth or a corrupt Anacreon from one of the most solidly established Necropoli. Saving souls, regardless of the direction of the threat, is what the Ferrymen have always been pledged to do, and is what they are doing still.

At least, that is their claim. Some wraiths believe it, some do not, and there is very little that anyone can do to further the matter.



collective Pathos inherent in the complete populace of both living and dead souls. To these wraiths, each missing soul retards the healing process for the individual and the community of victims. Each family still torn apart by the disappearance of loved ones encourages despair and brings Oblivion a step closer. Every wraith who has given up his or her quest for peace and submitted to the entropic mass strengthens the power of the darkness, and makes his or her death an empty sacrifice. If true victory over Oblivion is to be achieved, both among the Quick and the Dead, it can only be reached by the efforts of the collective conscience and hope of the millions of individuals.

Outsiders

The existence of these independent communities of Holocaust wraiths has been received with mixed feelings in the rest of the Shadowlands. Despite the granting of official status to these free camps of wraiths, suspicion of and opposition to their perceived motives does exist throughout the many levels of the Hierarchy. Several members of the Stygian bureaucracy and military organizations have expressed concern over surrendering to these ghettos the responsibilities of monitoring the nearby Nihils. Questions have surfaced regarding the amount of training and ability necessary to repel the forces of Oblivion successfully, and if these relatively young wraiths possess sufficient skill with which to do so. Many wraiths in the Hierarchy have openly stated that the combination of delicacy and determination required to offset the innate power of a Nihil may not be present among these communities. Responsibility for such an important task, critics say, should rest with the vastly more experienced wraiths of the Hierarchy.

Dybbuks

In Jewish mystical tradition, a dybbuk is a ghost of a person who has done some great wrong in life, and who has returned from the dead to possess a living person. Sometimes the dybbuk returns to wreak more evil, sometimes the dybbuk comes back to try to set things right, and sometimes he comes back just to suffer. It all depends upon which stories you read.

Following the signing of the Covenant of the Millions, the name dybbuk was applied, often derisively, to the Holocaust wraiths by their Stygian counterparts. The implication of the insult was clear: Whatever they'd gotten, they deserved.

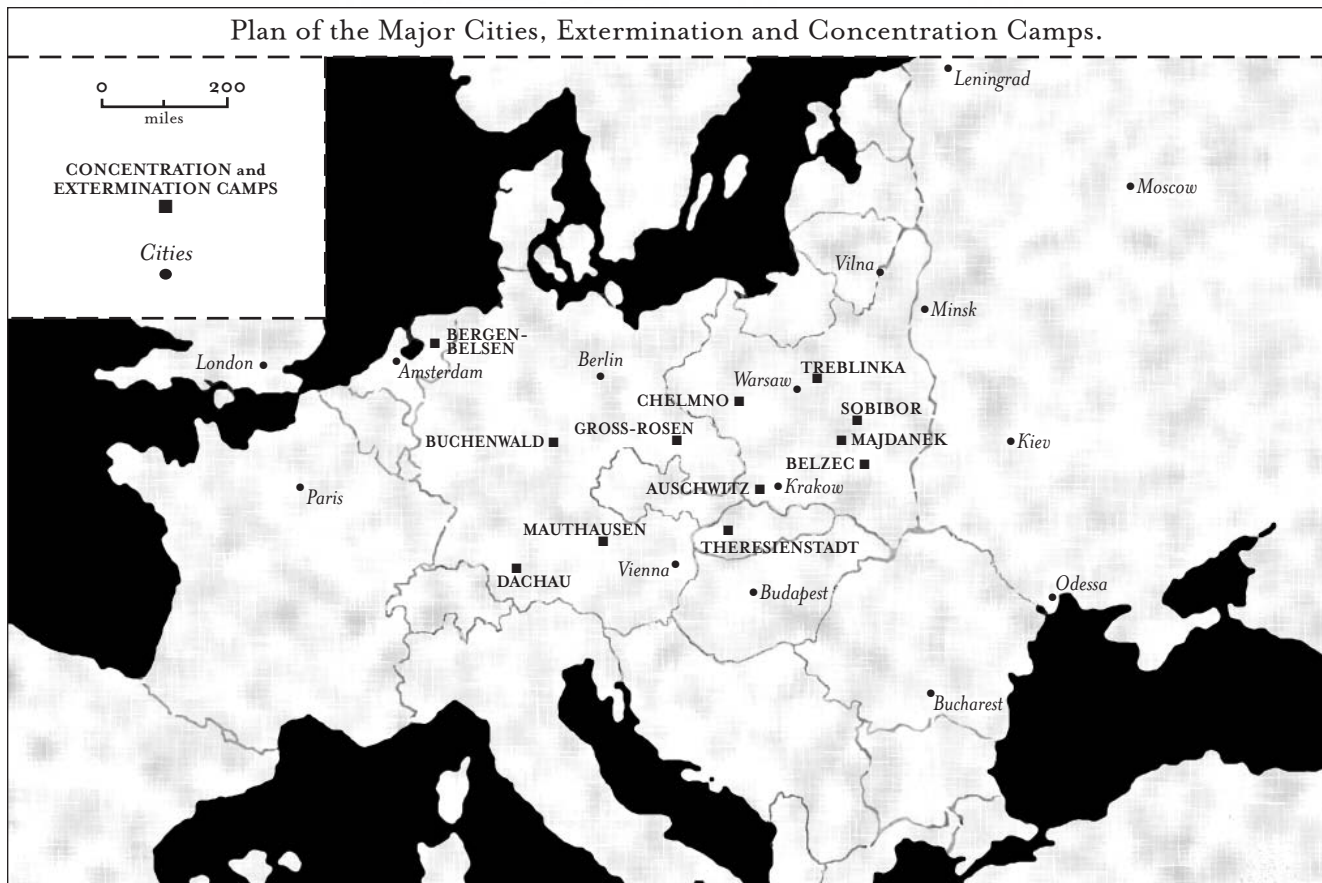
Many Holocaust wraiths took umbrage at this insult, which helped to widen the gap between free ghettos and Necropoli. Other Restless took up the name proudly and made it their own, transforming the intended derision into a source of pride. Today, many Holocaust wraiths refer to themselves and their peers as dybbuks.

The guarantees of the total independence of these ghettos from Stygia has also been an ongoing source of tension between the Hierarchy and the Holocaust communities. Despite the explicit terms of the Covenant of the Millions, the existence of several dozen Circles of wraiths acting under an umbrella of a totally clandestine nature has worried Anacreons and others, who simply do not trust these wraiths. What are they doing in there, the skeptics ask. Anacreons with Necropoli near (or in many cases bordering) these free ghettos have enunciated feelings of reluctance and mistrust concerning these outsiders' doings. Servants of the Deathlords who were required to cede some of their territory to groups of these wraiths during the failed Partition Accords have been especially vocal. They fear the possibility of attacks on their Necropoli by platoons from these ghettos as revenge for their part in the Deathlords' shoddy management of the entire affair.

The Covenant communities' attempts to coordinate Redemptions of fallen wraiths have also made many in Stygia curious, mainly about the success of such endeavors. Word about these efforts has slowly leaked out over the years, and at this point the Shoah wraiths have ceased denying it. Of course, if the Holocaust wraiths have developed a working method to effect a successful Redemption, many within the Hierarchy feel that they have a bounden duty to share this information. If, on the other hand, these touted Redemptions are failing, what are the potential consequences of such intense long-term contact with Spectres?

There are also a select few Hierarchs who believe that the communities of dybbuks have joined together in a conspiracy to unleash the power of all of these Nihils and Spectres all at once. According to these wraiths, the Shoah Restless have entered into secret negotiations with a Malfean to aim the effluvia of Oblivion toward Stygia and the Deathlords in revenge for what the Hierarchy was accused of during the sessions in the Onyx Tower. The proponents of this theory are very few in number, but their paranoia has managed to creep into other places within the Hierarchy. Slowly but surely, the opinions of many towards the Holocaust wraiths are cooling.

The matter of the souls of former Nazis has also been a lingering bone of contention between the free Holocaust communities and the Hierarchy. The Covenant of the Millions provides for the delivery of any wraith conclusively shown to be a former Nazi to the justice mechanisms of the free Circles. It also allows for wraiths in these Circles the freedom to move unhindered through the Shadowlands in order to investigate and search for the whereabouts of these criminals. Yet it has been said by the leaders of the free camps and Renegade groups of Holocaust wraiths that the Hierarchy has been harboring the souls of former SS men and other Nazi officials within their administration. Rumors persist that certain Deathlords and Anacreons have given shelter and immunity to many of the Holocaust's worst criminals. Top officials of the Third Reich, with the tacit approval of Stygian administra-



tors, have been furnished with new names and identities, and in some cases had their features modified to escape detection. There is also said to exist an underground Circle made up of former SS men, called the Nebula Group. Supposedly, this organization has played a huge part in procuring new identities and positions for former Nazis, as well as disseminating misleading information.

The Future

Nothing like the Holocaust had ever before been imagined. Its legacy in the form of millions of new souls and innumerable chasms created in the Tempest forever changed the shape of the Shadowlands. The endless streams of wraiths who were its offspring transformed irrevocably the society and government that had been in place for so long. It was a revolution of death, a twisted uprising of primal hate that had ignited the ovens in the realm of the Quick and had shattered the world of the Restless Dead.

The bond of the Covenant of the Millions provided not just an opportunity for a vast group of tortured beings to confront the reality of the netherworld. It provided an opportunity for rebuilding, not just for the millions of wraiths who make

up the free Holocaust camps, but for the entirety of Stygia. The full scale of horrors visited upon humanity by the Second World War destroyed communities and lives in the Skinlands and unleashed the Fifth Maelstrom, the awakening of Gorool, and the ultimate sacrifice of Charon in the Shadowlands.

Many wonder whether the Shadowlands are capable of surviving without the presence of Charon. Some are convinced that the next Maelstrom will be the one that unleashes the full potency of Oblivion and swallows all existence, Quick and Dead alike, in its nothingness. The Holocaust wraiths feel that the Shadowlands can survive, that Oblivion can not only be stopped, but finally defeated. The quest to gather together all of their millions of fellows is the guiding beacon that emboldens their actions and invigorates their resolve. These communities believe that the full pool of their emotions — fear, love, anger, confusion, revenge, introspection, deliverance — has the power to reach back across to the living world and plant the seed of tolerance and courage within humanity, ensuring that the foul blackness will never again reign over humankind's heart. It is this, they say, that will bring about the truth and the hope necessary to achieve nothing less than Transcendence.



An Antechamber of the Damned: The Theresienstadt Ghetto

by Jonathan Blacke



In the wake of the fall of Poland to the German forces in September 1939, the Nazi party moved quickly to round up the Jewish populations of Eastern Europe. They interred them within their own cities and towns, creating specially established ghettos in the historically Jewish sections of these municipalities. Hundreds of these ghettos were constructed in Poland, Romania, and elsewhere throughout Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe, high-walled prison camps that cut right across major city streets. Thousands of Jewish men, women and children were deported to these places, cordoned off from the outside world and exposed to overcrowding, contagion, abuse and outright murder at the hands of their Nazi wardens.

Theresienstadt, a small garrison town in Czechoslovakia left over from the Hapsburg Empire, was one such place. What was once a fortified barracks for the grenadiers of Joseph II became, under SS control, a place where Jews from Czecho-

slovakia, Germany, and other regions in central and Western Europe were transported. Unlike Warsaw or Lodz, however, Theresienstadt was to be different. Billed by Nazi propagandists as a "model Jewish settlement," it was supposedly a town where elders and prominent members of Jewish communities across Europe lived and worked freely, maintaining the singular cultural and societal traditions that had distinguished the Jewish quarters of European cities for centuries. To the rest of the world, represented by a delegation from the International Red Cross who visited the camp in 1944, Theresienstadt was everything the Nazis proclaimed it to be: Jewish families living and praying together; a Jewish council of elders leading the town in total self-government, and even a flourishing community of artists, musicians, and playwrights culled from the cream of European Jewry existing inside the walls.

Nothing could have been more false. During the three-and-a-half years Theresienstadt was in operation, it received over 140,000 Jews, who existed in a real working concentration camp. Within two months of the camp's inception, in January

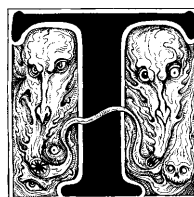


1942, the first in an unbroken chain of deportations of Jews farther east — to the killing centers — began. The little garrison town that had once moved Joseph II's troops to the front lines soon became a waystation for a different sort of transport: that of its Jewish population to Auschwitz. During its lifetime, Theresienstadt saw over 88,000 Jews deported to the premier death camp. Another 33,000 died within the ghetto's high walls and festering alleys, the victims of disease, torture or execution as a pustular tapestry of fear and lies and pain and death was woven within the shadows of its ramparts.


In the Shadowlands, the citadel of Theresienstadt still stands, a pulsing outcast of a structure in a rarely traveled region of the Shadowlands. It has become, in death, the antithesis of what it was in life — a free Circle of wraiths, Jewish and others, who have banded together to establish this camp as a place of healing and sanctuary, of support and remembrance. The ghetto's wraiths have assembled a community of rebuilding in this land of the Dead. They have pledged themselves to reuniting families torn apart in the destructive confusion of war, to assisting wraiths in locating long-lost Fetters, to find-

ing wandering victims and provide a guiding center for their existence beyond the Shroud — in short, to provide a place of salvation for the thousands of innocent victims who still wander the broken roads of the dead.

The Citadel Theresienstadt



Theresienstadt sits in the middle of a softly hillocked plain near the Ohre River in Bohemia. The fields and trees along the riverbanks stretching to the Middle-Bohemian Hills, spotted with orchards and vineyards, lend an uncharacteristically idyllic backdrop to the camp itself. Weather and time have discolored the surface of Theresienstadt's jagged, star-shaped ring of walls into a truncated spectrum ranging from dark red to purple all along its perimeter. Combined with the slate roofs of the barracks inside, the entire complex has the col-



oration of an old, deep wound, marring the verdant landscape even on the brightest of spring days. In the Shadowlands, the wound is real and tangible, a gash in the earth leading straight to the whirling chaos of the Tempest. The garishness of the colors is even more pronounced here; in some places the walls appear to smolder, in others to decay, and in others to bleed.

The interior of the camp is laid out in a typical military grid formation, all squares and angles, ostensibly to facilitate the movement of troops inside the walls from one part of the fortress to another during an attack or siege. Gray and square and unblinking in their solidness, barrack houses make up the vast majority of the buildings, taking up whole blocks inside the fortress. Built to house a total of 3,500 soldiers during their garrison days, these buildings held an average of at least 30,000 Jews during the ghetto's tenure, and at one point as many as 50,000. They loom over the narrow streets of the Shadowlands citadel, many of their sides marked with haunting murals drawn by a wraith known only as Butterfly.

In the center of the citadel stands a small square, bordered by the dead trunks of trees that ringed its perimeter in life. The square fronts the camp's small church with its towering steeple and the military headquarters' buildings, flanking it. The Skinlands church, auspiciously named the Church of the Resurrection, now serves as a backdrop for the assemblies of the population of Theresienstadt, who come to the square to voice their opinions and vote upon business that affects the entire Haunt. Behind the church stands the central hospital, where Dr. Richard Holvenbach and a small group of nurses struggled against the epidemics of TB and cholera that rampaged through the camp during the war. In the Shadowlands, the hospital is a meeting place for the hundreds of wraiths who fell victim to the diseases brought on by overcrowded, unsanitary conditions. They look to Dr. Holvenbach as their spokesperson in the camp, and he takes the great responsibility of representing them seriously.

To the east of the hospital is the Magdeburg Barracks, which housed the *Judenrat*, or Jewish Council of Elders, during the Nazi overseeing of the camp. It is now the seat of leadership in the camp, headed by Solomon Eisenfeld. A former member of the Council in life, Eisenfeld runs the camp with a fair and caring hand. He seeks to make the dark fortress a beacon of hope for the millions of victims of the Nazi war machine. No one knows more than he how difficult such a task can be.

Despite the best efforts of the wraith population of Theresienstadt to cleanse this garrison of the hateful, fearful memories attached to it, many reminders of the abominations that transpired within the walls are flagrantly evident in the Land of the Dead. Outside the bleeding walls of Theresienstadt lies the Small Fortress, an annex built across the Ohre River to defend

both banks from attack. This squat, unassuming brick outpost became its own death camp during the war. Here hundreds of Jews were imprisoned, tortured and summarily executed by the SS for breaking the rules of the camp. In the Shadowlands, the Small Fortress stands sleek and dangerous — it is positioned over the opening to a Nihil that leads immeasurably down to the heart of the storm. This Nihil is a constant threat to the integrity of the Theresienstadt fortress, for it is not unknown for Spectres to appear and attack the walls or grab unprotected wraiths. Occasionally, the more adventurous wraiths will set out to try and fight with Spectres who hover in the abyss, but such campaigns are seen to be only for the braver — or crazier — wraiths.


History

The Preparations

At dawn on November 24, 1941, an activity all too familiar in Nazi-occupied territories repeated itself, as 342 young men from Prague were herded into boxcars at the Masaryk railway station in the city and taken away, never to be seen again in the capital. Five hours later, the train and its human cargo arrived at the town of Bohusovice, where the men disembarked and walked the couple of miles to the leering, solid ramparts of an old garrison fortress. Surrounded by a wide moat, its ancient battlements were ringed with very modern soldiers and weapons. The transportees marched inside; the gates closed behind them and gendarmes from the local Czech police were posted outside the walls.

Thus began the operation of Theresienstadt, a chronicle of infamy which would last until the end of the war. It was originally created by Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Gestapo, for the elderly Jews of Europe: those over 65 years old and those who could not bear the strain imposed upon them by full resettlement in Poland. Heydrich's propaganda promoted the Theresienstadt camp in a favorable light, calling it a "model ghetto" and billing it as a sort of "Jewish reservation." With rumors of the horrible conditions in Polish camps freely circulating in the Jewish communities of central Europe, the advance publicity about the Theresienstadt camp began to assuage some of the fears that had spread throughout local Jewish populations.

Jewish leaders sought active participation in the initial construction and organization of the ghetto. Siegfried Seidl, whom the SS had appointed as camp commandant and leader of the ghetto operation in the summer of 1941, ordered the local Prague Jewish community to assemble a team of workers and



technicians to prepare the fortress town for its transformation into the “autonomous ghetto,” as it was touted by Nazi accounts. Over 400 people, mostly volunteer Jewish laborers with a small core of administrative types, were collected to ready the camp. They expended a great deal of energy and enthusiasm in their work, and Seidl and his men played further on the promises of autonomy. He extended “privileges,” permitting the Jewish population its own guard, technical and legal sections and finance department with its own type of currency. These bills showed a picture of Moses bearing aloft the Tablets of the Law.

On November 30 and December 2, 1941, two more transports totalling 3,000 people came from Prague to the camp. These included the hand-picked *Judenrat* (the Council of Elders, the administrative Jewish body of the camp chosen by Seidl), another 1,000 young volunteer laborers, and a great many older Jews from Prague. All had signed “transfer of residence” agreements with the local Nazi constabulary — agreements that forfeited all of their property to the Nazi resettlement authorities for the purchase of a place in the Theresienstadt ghetto. The agreement was to guarantee them food, clothing, shelter and medical care for life.

The Reality

It was soon evident to all of the residents of Theresienstadt that what they had heard about and hoped for from the establishment of this ghetto was nothing but a delusory miasma. Almost daily, prohibitions on behavior and possessions were handed down by the SS through the medium of the Council of Elders. Men and women and children were segregated in separate barracks and not allowed to fraternize with each other or the small population of non-Jewish denizens of the ghetto. All uniformed personnel had to be saluted. A strict curfew was imposed upon all of the Jewish residents. No one was allowed to walk on the pavement of the little town, to smoke, to sing or whistle, to pick wild flowers, or to communicate with the outside world. Children were often not allowed out of their barracks at all, except for on Sunday, when they were marched two at a time under armed escorts to visit their mothers in the women’s barracks.

Punishment for any transgression was swift and severe, consisting of beatings with a cane for small offenses (carried out by one’s fellow prisoners), imprisonment in the Small Fortress for up to several months for larger offenses, or in the case of attempted contact with outsiders, with hanging. On January 10, 1942, nine prisoners were hanged for sending illegal messages outside the walls. Seven others were hanged for the same crime less than a month later.

These incidents, however, would not be the worst evil inflicted upon the Jewish prisoners. On January 9th, the day before the first group of executions, 1,000 persons were deported

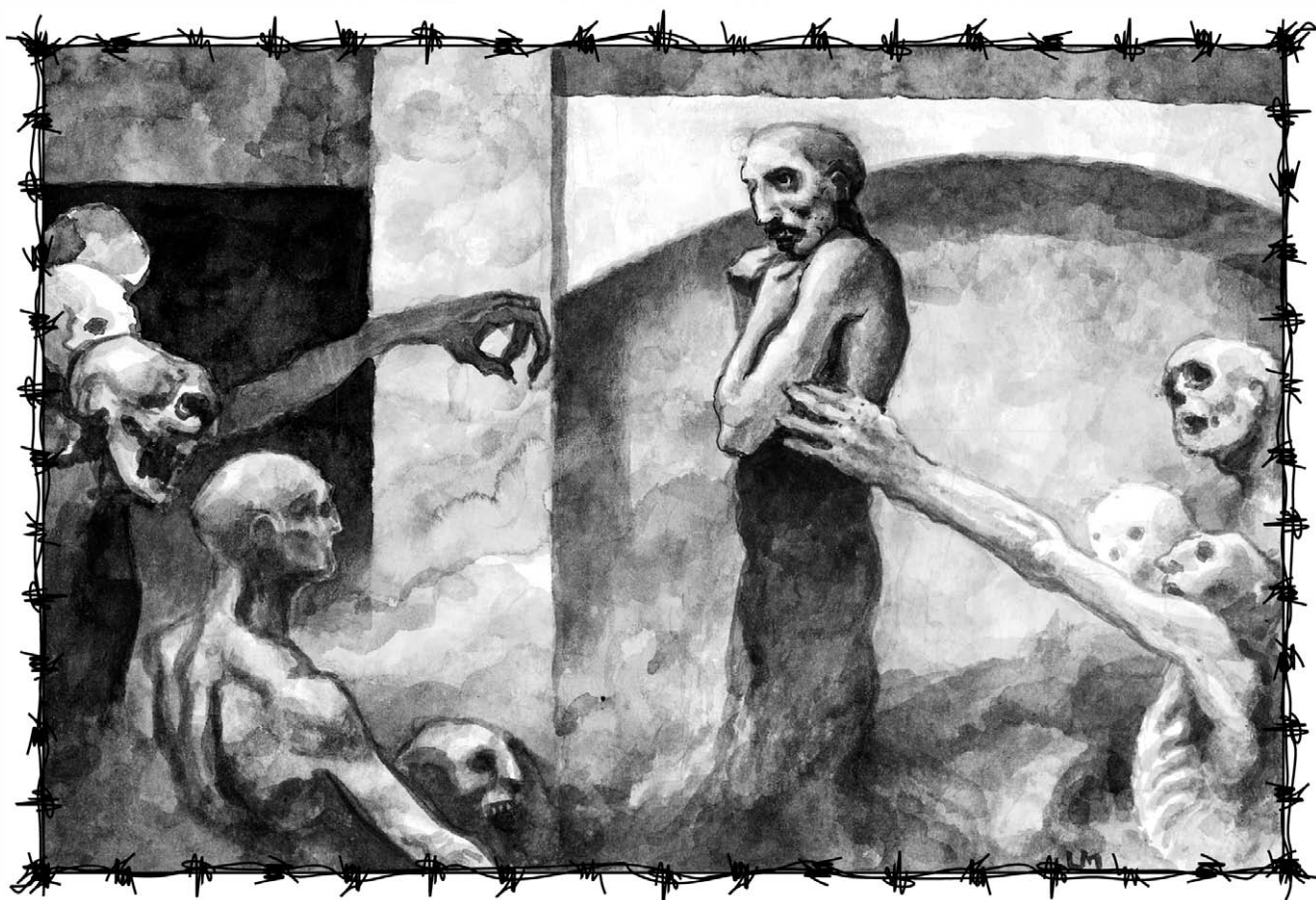
from the camp to Riga, in the Soviet Union. The *Judenrat* was given the ignominious task, five days before, of selecting the individuals to be deported, according to certain guidelines from the SS. People, called by their prisoner codes, assembled in an area behind the barracks, clutching bedrolls and small valises, waiting to be taken to the station at Bohusovice. From there they were loaded on trains and transported to Riga. None was ever heard from again.

This event immediately revealed the true nature of the ghetto, the very thing that these people had given up their lives to supposedly avoid. It was a collection point for the trains eastward. In irregular instances from January 1942 until the fall of 1944, orders would come down instructing the numbers and categories of people to be shipped east, to Chelmno, Sobibor, Majdanek, Treblinka, and the main point of arrival, Auschwitz. At first, those inmates still in the ghetto were given meliorating postcards from relatives who were now in the “family camp” at Auschwitz. These postcards were written at gunpoint from family members who, by the time the postcards reached Theresienstadt, were very likely no more than ash. Eventually, even the specious postcards stopped coming, no longer able (or worthwhile) to fool the prisoners of model camp.

The Conditions

In the summer of 1942, the Nazis evacuated the entire non-Jewish population of Theresienstadt, just in time to make room for a huge surge in transports of the elderly to the camp. As well as effectively closing off all contact with the outside world, the flood of new transports soon filled Theresienstadt with over 53,000 Jews; the fortress had been built to hold a maximum of 8,000. The Hanover Barracks, whose capacity was 1,900 persons, housed 3,250 by the end of August. Dresden Barracks held 4,430 instead of its listed capacity of 3,500; Podmokly Barracks’ 700 spaces were filled by 1,851 inhabitants. Czech law mandated a minimum amount of living space for any one in an apartment building or similar large dwelling of eight square yards per person. In Theresienstadt the prisoners averaged two.

The effects of this virtual suffocation were immediately realized. Streets became so crowded it was only possible to walk down them sideways. Thick, bacteria-laden dust covered every surface. The barracks stank like a sewer, the prisoners’ threadbare mattresses serving as nests to flies, lice and bedbugs. Light in most barrack rooms was given off by a single weak bulb swinging from a naked wire in the ceiling. Stairwells were ankle-deep in waste and trash; latrines overflowed with slime and human shit. To walk into one of the crowded barracks was to be assaulted with a barrage of horrifying sensations: the sights of dimly lit, half-



hallucinatory shapes of men, women and children, scarred by whips and covered in lesions; the sounds of their moaning and shrieking, vain defenses against their own internal nightmares; and the stench of filth and disease, and starvation — the stale, cloying, unmistakable smell of the human body undergoing the paradoxical parasitism of feeding upon itself.

Rations were reduced in the camp because of the sudden influx of Jews; most of the slave laborers were given nine ounces of bread, two ounces of potatoes and a watery gruel each day. It was even less for those too old or infirm to work. Pneumonia, TB, scarlet fever, typhus, cholera, dysentery and cerebrospinal fever were some of the diseases that feasted upon the wretches in the barracks. The death toll just inside the camp from disease and sickness rose to 32 deaths per day in July 1942, 75 per day in August, and 131 in September. When a member of the *Judenrat* reported these statistics to Seidl, his response was, "The clock is going right." Hundreds of men were conscripted day after day to dig mass graves, wherein they piled the corpses of their dead friends and loved ones. Their burden was lightened only by the completion of the camp's crematorium, whereafter the majority of the dead were consigned to the flames — a frightening fore-

shadowing of what would await most of the prisoners, much later, at the terminus of a train ride east.

In spite of the deadly conditions and regular trainloads of deportations, there did exist a community of men and women, scholars, writers, artists and thinkers who endeavored to create some semblance of a microcosmic culture in the very shadow of extinction. Original operettas and musical compositions were written and performed in the small church courtyard in the center of the camp. Poetry readings were held, and both the old and young alike drew and painted sketches of ghetto life. Yet much of this activity was always tempered with the harshness of the inmates' plight, especially in the paintings and poetry of the young children, and even in their daily games. One of the most popular was a grotesque parody of Monopoly called "Ghetto" where the Go To Jail square was replaced by a square called *Schleuse* (Deportation).

The Embellishment

In the summer and fall of 1943, as the death camps operated at peak efficiency, the flow of prisoners through There-


sienstadt increased under new camp commandant Anton Burger. List numbers increased and exemptions dwindled as Jews from the Netherlands and Denmark were deported to Theresienstadt. When the lists of deportees were found to be short several dozen victims in the fall of 1943, Burger ordered a thorough count of the entire population of Theresienstadt. At 7:00 A.M. on November 11, 1943, the entire Jewish population of Theresienstadt — 36,000 men, women and children — were marched out of the camp into a large meadow near Bohusovice and forced to stand in groups of 100 while the SS guards counted and counted them, and then recounted them again. The Jews were forced to stand in a freezing rain for nearly 16 hours as they were enumerated by their jailers. Many of them thought that this was the end, that they would all be packed onto trains that very day. Close to 300 people died right on the field from exposure.

During the winter of 1943, rumors about the extermination camps in the east prompted many international organizations to protest the treatment of Jewish prisoners in Nazi-run concentration camps. With the intent of mollifying international opinion, a delegation of the International Red Cross was allowed to make a visit to Theresienstadt in the summer of 1944, to see for themselves the full realization of the “model ghetto.” Anton Burger’s replacement, Karl Rahm, immediately set out to turn Theresienstadt into what the Nazi press offices had trumped it up to be.

A monumental change came over Theresienstadt. The central square was resodded and planted with over twelve hundred rosebushes. A gazebo was erected, and concerts were performed there twice an evening. The gymnasium was transformed into a Jewish prayer hall, and one of the hospitals became a library. The mess hall was beautified with linen tablecloths and floral centerpieces and pretty waitresses, and in the windows of the butcher shop hung substantial sausages, canned meats and wursts. A children’s pavilion, replete with sandboxes, swing sets and giant wooden animals was built — although the children would only be allowed inside on the day of the Red Cross visit. The head of the *Judenrat* was provided with a chauffeur-driven limousine and his own apartments.

The Jews in the ghetto were taken aback at the total reversal of atmosphere. Mandatory saluting of SS men had ceased. Food rations increased, as did general space, although this was mainly due to increased transports east — the population of the ghetto was 34,000 at the time, and to show the world that Theresienstadt was a ghetto for the aged and privileged, 3,000 young, healthy prisoners were sent to Auschwitz to reduce the numbers and correct the age demographics. Barrack space, however, did not increase. Since the delegation was only going to be shown the ground floors, all barrack occupants were crammed even more tightly into the upper floors of the housings while the show floors were repainted and refurbished.





Many of the prisoners had previously witnessed Burger at work in Prague, where his reputation for cruelty and coldness was nearly unparalleled. Few were so naïve as to believe that this “bliss and comfort” of Rahm and the SS would remain after the Red Cross left; many were sure that conditions would worsen egregiously after the official visit ended. Still, the *Judenrat* took advantage of the relaxed regulations to try and better the prisoners’ conditions. It was generally felt that the “embellishment,” although pointless, was a small respite while it lasted.

It was to be one of the largest and boldest ruses of the Nazi regime. The International Red Cross delegation was treated to a soccer game, rock gardens, professionally run bakeries and butcheries and pharmacies, a restaurant, fire and police services, a hospital, a theater and the children’s pavilion. The visit took six hours, and the IRC delegation fell for the embellishment completely. Glowing reports were sent to the IRC offices in Stockholm. A propaganda film, made by the Nazi government in the wake of the Red Cross visit, showed the world what the IRC delegation had seen: a community of Jews living under the benevolent auspices of the Third Reich.

After the delegation had left, the pavilions and gazebos were destroyed. The flowers and tablecloths disappeared, along with the nourishing meals. Those who were part of the documentary film, as well as the entire membership of the *Judenrat* and nearly all the children, were deported to Auschwitz.

The Final Days

Eleven thousand Jews remained in Theresienstadt after the widespread purges of the summer and fall of 1944. The ghetto was emptier than it ever had been, but it would not remain so for long. In the winter, transports continued to arrive, full of half-Jews from Germany and Austria. In the beginning of 1945, a completely different sort of transport reached Theresienstadt — from the east. Trains, trucks, and forced marches brought thousands of prisoners from other camps in the east, such as Buchenwald, Belsen and Dachau, to Theresienstadt. The concentration camps and death camps were being evacuated, barely a half-step ahead of the Russian army pressing westward.

The sudden arrival of these people from the east — emaciated persons grossly infected with typhus, heavy fevers, and convulsions; nearly mad survivors of the death camps reduced to gibbering shells of sentience horrified the prisoners of Theresienstadt. The rumors of what was happening in the east, heard and half-believed by many, now solidified into a real, unforgiving truth with the arrival of these thousands of survivors.

The population again swelled, to over 33,000 people in the spring of 1945. With the war definitely lost, the actions of the SS wavered from one day to the next. Guards increased food

allowances and spoke courteously to prisoners, afraid of their punishment after the war. Karl Rahm, the commandant, took a different tack. Under orders to destroy all records, he ordered boxes upon boxes of prisoner cards and deportation lists burned, as well as a huge pit dug outside the gates, large enough to hold the bodies of over 10,000 Jews. Workmen were dispatched to seal off all doors and ventilation shafts leading underground. Plans were made to gas the entire camp population.


Fortunately, this effort came too late. On May 11, 1945, Theresienstadt and its population of 32,000 inmates was liberated by the Russian army. Between November 24, 1941 and April 20, 1945, over 140,000 Jews across Europe had been deported to Theresienstadt. Of these, close to 87,000 had been deported to the death camps; fewer than 3,000 of this number survived. Over 33,000 people had died within the walls of disease, starvation, beatings and executions, more than had died at Dachau in its 12 years of operation. Perhaps the most repulsive statistic is the number of children who were deported to Theresienstadt, nearly 15,000, and the number of those who survived — less than 100.

The Ghetto Circle

The citadel of Theresienstadt in the Shadowlands is home to several hundred wraiths, bound together in a community called the Ghetto Circle. When the citadel’s smoking, bleeding walls first appeared in the Shadowlands, the wraiths who were first drawn to its edifice found themselves arrived at an unstable, menacing structure, its foundations charred, crumbling and rank with rot. The streets of the little garrison were ripped up, and in many cases heaving from small eddies of Maelstrom; the remnants of barracks and administration buildings were wrecked and barely corporeal.

The first wraiths who arrived were, to put it in the mildest possible way, wary about venturing back inside the Shadowlands husk of the camp, their former prison and death house. Spectres swarmed through the cramped avenues, and hallucinations of friends and loved ones long dead palled the atmosphere of these souls’ ironic homecoming. Panic set deeply in the new arrivals’ minds; many wrestled with the idea fleeing the site and taking their chances in the Tempest. Some wanted to destroy the entire edifice, although how this was to be accomplished was anyone’s guess — the dead here had even fewer tools than the living. None of the wraiths who found themselves staring once again at the garrison’s massive, forbidding iron gates and gangrenous walls ever wished to cross its damning threshold again.

Yet they entered.



It was partly a lack of anywhere else to go, partly out of curiosity. But each and every wraith who did and does journey to the haunt at Theresienstadt has come guided by a common wish — to put right, for themselves and their fellows, what was destroyed. In the beginning, the pilgrimage into the old fortress was simply a matter of survival. The Nihil that sits beneath the Small Fortress was much larger than it is today, teeming with Spectres and other effluvia of the Tempest. The first group of wraiths to appear at Theresienstadt concerned themselves with simply beating back the abysmal hordes and closing the Nihil as much as possible. It was a long and dangerous fight; many were lost and much was destroyed. But as other souls made Theresienstadt the end of their journey, the wraiths' numbers grew and the Nihil was effectively beaten down to its present dimensions.

The wraiths founded a Circle within the walls, drawing up a community and a charter. Many of them had wandered for a long while before finding Theresienstadt, and had picked up various talents from people and groups on the fringes of Stygian society: some had been taught a few impromptu Guild talents, some had picked up other skills on their own. It was agreed by all that the wraiths who formed this community, called the Ghetto Circle, would individually and collectively utilize their talents, their energies and their Pathos toward reconstructing the families, the communities and the memories of all those who had passed through the gates of Theresienstadt in life.

Such a pledge often proves formidable. Though solid enough, the walls of Theresienstadt are not free from fading away to nothing: the surrounding population of the Skinlands garrison rarely journeys to this genocidal reminder. Theresienstadt is remembered in memorials and exhibits in other regions of the Skinlands, to be sure, but these instances of remembrance are far distanced from the actual site of the horrors. Tapping into the emotional energy of the Quick to strengthen the integrity of the Haunt, therefore, requires an enormous amount of effort and Pathos on the part of the whole wraith community.

Most of the trappings of the Ghetto Circle bear little resemblance to the workings of the ghetto during the war. In fact, much of the meticulous organization of Nazi regulations is, understandably, absent in the structure of the Circle. The government of the citadel (which is essentially equivalent to the hierarchy of the Circle itself) is rather loose. Theresienstadt is presided over by a wraith picked by the entire Circle. He or she is vested with the leadership of the Circle as well as the responsibility of communication with the outside world, with other free haunts as well as with the Stygian bureaucracy under the provisions stated in the Covenant of the Millions.

The present leader of the Ghetto Circle is Solomon Eisenfeld, a rabbi and member of the *Judenrat* during the camp's existence. Eisenfeld does not keep a structured cabinet, but does consult with a group of informal advisors, many of whom have had the ear of Eisenfeld for so long that they comprise a *de facto* cabinet all by themselves. Eisenfeld meets frequently with this group of wraiths, who inform him of the wishes of their "constituents." He also holds regular meetings with the entire Circle, convening these gatherings in the central courtyard of the camp. Here, decisions that affect the whole community are discussed and put to vote, and news from the other free camps or Stygia is disseminated as well. Once a month, Solomon Eisenfeld journeys outside the walls to receive a lone delegate from Stygia, whose job it is to maintain the relationship between Theresienstadt and Stygia as outlined in the Covenant. The two remain outside the fortress while they do their business, the representative leaves as quietly as he came, and Eisenfeld returns to the camp. It is an occasion that leaves many members of the Circle with a feeling of uneasiness — Eisenfeld included.

Different groups exist within the Circle, delineated according to their duties and wishes. The most sizable group of wraiths is concerned with the Circle's program of Redemption — tracking down those wraiths whose death within the camp was so violent that they crossed the Shroud as Mortwrights. The wraiths involved with Redemptions constantly seek the key to tapping into the Psyche of the Mortwright and initiating the process of a Redemption, in order to cut the chain which binds the Mortwright to Oblivion and return him to something more like his former self. The Redemption programs are overseen by Richard Holvenbach, a camp doctor in the wartime ghetto. Holvenbach has enlisted a great deal of help in his efforts, much of which comes from his former patients.

Other groups, although nowhere near as large, also help comprise the Circle. The artists and musicians make up their own sect, as do many of the laborers. There is also a small group of wraiths, no more than a dozen in number, who do not consider themselves to be part of the Circle group but who are still members of the camp's society. They are the delegates from the Red Cross visit, who have in Theresienstadt a strong Fetter and a source of guilt for their roles as fools during the war. Many of them have come to the Circle asking for forgiveness from the wraiths there, or time to walk the streets and come to terms with their guilt. Eisenfeld has welcomed them inside, but many in the Ghetto Circle have not; despite Eisenfeld's assurances of support, some of the delegates are as much pariahs than penitents.

"Butterfly"

Her real name, some think, was Rachel, but no one in Theresienstadt knew the young Jewish artist as anything but "Butterfly." She was born in Berlin in the spring of 1915, the inevitable product of a young army lieutenant's farewell to his secret sweetheart before he was sent to the blood-red Belgian poppy fields. Her father's family, born from proud Prussian stock, soon found out about their son's extracurriculars with Butterfly's mother, and were duly scandalized, more because of her mother's lower-class station than her Jewish background. The pressure of the family was too much for Butterfly's mother, who succumbed to their wishes and surrendered her first-born to the local orphanage, the only home Butterfly would ever know. By the time Butterfly was a teenager, the Depression had hit Europe, and the orphanage was soon forced to close its doors. At the age of 16, Butterfly found herself turned out onto the street.

Wandering the alleys of Berlin, desperate to find someplace safe, Butterfly soon joined a commune of street artists — young people like herself — who drew and sketched and played music in the city's plazas for a few precious pfennigs to make it to the next day. Butterfly could draw, and she quickly became one of the more successful sidewalk artists, sketching pleasant scenes in bright chalks on the pavements of Berlin even as the daily duress of the city unfolded around her. She drew these scenes as well, alone at night: dank sketches of haggard bread lines, wild-eyed students, and the thuggery of the new National Socialist Party's "Brown Shirts." A tense, gloomy atmosphere was echoed in her haunting, fearful night drawings.

As the country fell further under the spell of the Nazis, people like those in Butterfly's commune quickly became endangered. They went further and further underground, as escalating tensions and Gestapo brutality made street life for such "non-Aryans" a terrifying prospect. The war came, and the purges increased, and soon Butterfly was picked up and crowded into a dank, dirty boxcar. She was sent to Theresienstadt in the fall of 1942. From her moment of arrival, this young Jewish woman was not fooled by the trumped-up propaganda of the "model ghetto" — she knew well that this was where she very well might die. Butterfly interacted little with the other women in her barracks, and less so with the men. She preferred to spend time with the children in the ghetto, when they were allowed time in the women's barracks to visit their mothers. She would often tell them stories, or sing to them, or draw pictures of the surrounding countryside for them, filling her sketches with brightly colored butterflies. Hence her nickname, given to her by the children.

Fear and Loathing

Conflict exists within any Circle of wraiths, be they Heretic, Renegade or conformist, and the Ghetto Circle is no exception. Internal disagreement and dissension is present within the bleeding walls of this ghetto; the singular nature of the camp magnifies the tension. Theresienstadt was a prison, pure and simple. Despite any Nazi-created artifices in life or appearance of conformity in death, the wraiths who comprise the Ghetto Circle are bound together because of their loss: the loss of freedom, identity, sanity, hope and ultimately life that they all suffered within these walls. The quest for harmony and peace among the wraiths of Theresienstadt is a constant, nerve-wracking clash of old hatreds and new uncertainties about their individual and collective plights.

Each band of wraiths within the Ghetto Circle harbors its own agenda about the direction and future of Theresienstadt, and politicking within the walls often turns ugly. The small group of wraiths who were part of the Red Cross delegation and are Fettered to the camp are often targets of back-alley scorn and insult from many former prisoners — they see these souls as no better than the Nazis who fooled them. Fights and discrimination, provoked by none but followed through by many, occur frequently.

The largest block of wraiths within the camp, the "patients" led by Richard Holvenbach who assist him in the Redemption program, are often a powerful force within the ghetto's community. More often than not their sheer numbers allow them (and by definition Holvenbach) to set internal policy for the Circle. Many wraiths in the minority resent this tyranny of the majority, particularly when this tyranny has a German doctor as its point man.

The Redemption program is also a source of fear and worry for many wraiths in Theresienstadt. Despite Holvenbach's unending quest for the key to reconstituting a Spectre into its original form, he has not yet met with success. Whispers in the camp about the details good doctor's methods have increased. There have also been recent reports of Artificers visiting Holvenbach at the camp hospital. Whether or not the visitors Holvenbach receives at such odd hours are indeed Artificers is anybody's guess, but their suspected purpose frightens many other wraiths in the ghetto — it is whispered by many that the interlopers are there to dispose of the subjects of failed Redemptions. Holvenbach has categorically denied any such thing, but wraiths in Theresienstadt still fear for their own souls, afraid of ending up on the doctor's table — and later on as change in his pocket....

Butterfly was one of the many artists who was co-opted to work in the *Zeichenstube*, the drafting room set up by the Nazis where prisoners reproduced idyllic works of art or scenes from the fictional “life” of the ghetto. She still did her secret drawings, darker and truer than ever, hiding them from the SS guards. This secret life lasted until the beginning of 1944, when the preparations for the “embellishment” were underway. During a random search of the barracks, soldiers uncovered Butterfly’s real drawings. She was immediately arrested and taken to the Small Fortress, where her jailer looked at the young woman and offered leniency in exchange for sexual favors. She refused, whereupon the brute decided simply to take what he wanted by force. She again refused his advances, and he savagely beat her, cracking a few ribs and several bones in her face, and finishing by stomping on her drawing hand until it was crushed to a bloody mess. No longer attracted to the broken thing lying at his feet, the guard pulled out his Mauser and shot her in the head.

Butterfly has been roaming the roads of the Theresienstadt Haunt practically since its inception; in fact, no one in the Circle can ever remember her *not* being there. She has a singular communion with the crumbling structure of the Haunt, and is so attuned to the flood of raw emotions in the area that she can literally feel the battle between the wraiths in the Circle and the forces of Oblivion. Her drawings cover the full spectrum of heightened emotions she experiences. Sometimes she draws bucolic scenes of the Skinlands countryside, other times she depicts Bosch-style representations of the tortures of the camp or the internal struggle between her and her Shadow. Butterfly can be



seen working endlessly at her sketches, but since she speaks only to a very few, the meanings of her eternal scratchings are often lost. Many wonder if she has the strength to keep her Shadow in check for any real length of time, or if this Butterfly’s wings will unleash a storm straight from the mouth of the Void.

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Loner

Circle: The Ghetto Circle

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Artistic Expression 4, Awareness 4, Empathy 3, Streetwise 2

Skills: Meditation 5, Performance 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 3, Astrology 2, Lore 3

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Eidolon 3, Haunts 1, Notoriety 2, Status 1

Passions: Convince the Circle to believe what she can detect from the power within the camp (Acceptance) 4, Hone her art to the point where her images inspire emotions beneficial to other wraiths (Hope) 4, Search for some of the children whom she used to watch over in life (Devotion) 3

Arcanoi: Castigate 2, Fatalism 4, Keening 2, Lifeweb 2, Pandemonium 1

Fetters: The camp (especially the Small Fortress) 5, Sketchbook 4

Willpower: 7

Pathos: 7

Permanent Corpus: 7

Shadow: The Abuser

Angst: 6

Thorns: Dark Allies, Freudian Slip, Shadow Call, Trick of the Light

Shadow Passions: Convince Butterfly that no one cares about her communion with the forces of the camp and make her feel worthless enough to embrace Oblivion (Fear) 3, Annihilate Aaron Dahlcek, a fellow wraith in whom Butterfly confides (Hate) 4, Delude Butterfly into thinking that the Circle would benefit from her sacrificing herself to Oblivion (Deception) 4

Image: Butterfly appears to be in her late 20s, with curly black hair and dark brown eyes. She has a thin, fragile body, and her destroyed right hand looks to have been Moliated into a sort of drawing stick. This is the instrument she uses to cover the houses and walls of Theresienstadt with her unmistakable work. She moves quickly and silently throughout the citadel, dressed in flowing muted garments. A look of ferocious vision

is always ensconced upon her young face; only Dahlcek claims to have ever seen her smile.

Roleplaying Notes: You are consumed by the forces raging within the walls of the fortress. The Haunt seems to speak to you, and you try to express its thoughts, however inadequately, in your murals. You tend to shun most contact with your fellow wraiths, but are occasionally able to confide in a few people. Your most recent confidant is a carpenter named Aaron Dahlcek, one of the earliest to have been sent to Theresienstadt. This place has given you a special insight into the true conflict between hope and Oblivion being waged, and it is an insight not widely comprehensible to your fellow Circle wraiths, not even Dahlcek.

Solomon Eisenfeld

The question of what happens when God's teachings and man's reality collide was always on the mind of Solomon Eisenfeld. A rabbi in a modest part of the Jewish section of Prague, Solomon Eisenfeld's sermons were so original and thought-provoking they attracted listeners from all parts of the capital to the steps of his tiny synagogue. Eisenfeld received them all, listened intently to their questions, and tried to give the best counsel he could to any who crossed his *shul's* threshold. As the decade of the 1930s drew to a close, more and more people, tense because of the encroaching Nazi regime, came to see him. They came asking him to help their spirits in the face of the storm many could sense coming; they came asking for guidance. Moved by compassion and obligation, he obliged as best as he could.

While many were silent, Eisenfeld spoke out from his pulpit against the Nazis' treatment of Jews in Germany. He acquired a few silent supporters, but more vocal enemies — Jew and non-Jew alike — who tried to keep this local soapboxer from stirring up trouble. After the events of *Kristallnacht*, Eisenfeld's own synagogue was broken into and vandalized, his listeners were bullied away from attending to hear him, and his own life was threatened. This only made Eisenfeld more determined.

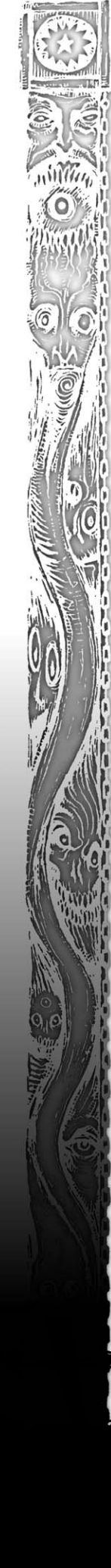
The dangerous dance went on for nearly two years after the Germans rolled into Czechoslovakia, until the local Nazi government finally had enough of Eisenfeld's presence. He was arrested late in 1941 and deported almost immediately. His destination was Theresienstadt.

Upon the opening of the newly created camp, Solomon Eisenfeld was hand-picked for a seat on the *Judenrat*. He was placed on the Transport Committee, a position of no more discernible function than simply another vote on the council, until the beginning of 1942. Only then was the true nature of the Transport Committee's responsibilities spelled out: the selection of groups of Jewish inmates to be shipped to the east — and to death. For



almost two years, Solomon Eisenfeld sat on the Transport Committee, hearing the tearful pleas of thousands upon thousands of prisoners. Many of them had sought his counsel back in the little synagogue in Prague. Now they were overcome with hysteria as they begged him not to be put on the next train. He could do nothing but sit in chilled silence as whole families ranted and raved and cried and collapsed with exhaustion in search of just 24 more hours together.

Eisenfeld fought hard for every case that came before the committee, as vocally as he had opposed the Nazis all those years ago in Prague, but the trains had to be filled. He knew as much, and loathed himself for it. Every pair of eyes that locked upon him as he filtered through the cramped streets were full of terror or contempt. No one envied him. No one sympathized with him. In this fortress where people slept six and seven to a bed, Solomon Eisenfeld was completely, utterly alone, sure he had been abandoned by both man and God alike. In the summer of 1944, when the Nazis were planning the "show camp" for the visit by the Red Cross, a cruel twist of fate befell Solomon Eisenfeld. Somehow, his name came up on one of the lists for the train east. At dawn the next morning, the rabbi boarded an already overcrowded train, shunned, drained, and broken by the Nazi war machine. He did not survive the afternoon.



Solomon Eisenfeld reached the dark fortress in the Shad-
owlands a mere wisp, hardly corporeal enough to be anything
more than a bad memory. Over the years, he has managed
to find forgiveness from some of the wraiths who remember
the kind rabbi from the little temple in Prague, and who can
perhaps find some compassion for the haggard man who died
internally every time he sent another eastward. These few
mercies have strengthened him over the years and rekindled
the warmth that fired the soul of the young rabbi of Prague.
Finding the strength to reconstitute himself somehow, Solomon
Eisenfeld has been the leader of the Ghetto Circle, and the
voice of Theresienstadt, for many years now.

His position has not been an easy one. Many wraiths who
begged him for salvation in life, and were denied it, hardly trust
him in death. The importance of the Redemption program
makes Dr. Holvenbach an unignorable voice, and often the
two men do not see eye to eye. Add to this the vocal opinions
of his fellow wraiths from the *Judenrat*, some of whom would
rather they were in charge instead of Eisenfeld, and the weight
of the strain on the rabbi begins to mount. Inevitably, these
worries produce fissures in the rabbi's psychic armor, weaknesses
which his Shadow is always willing to exploit.

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Judge

Circle: The Ghetto Circle

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Awareness 3, Diplomacy 3, Empathy 4, Expression
3, Instruction 3

Skills: Etiquette 2, Leadership 3, Meditation 2

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 3, Enigmas 2, Law 1, Linguistics 2,
Politics 2, Theology 4

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Eidolon 2, Haunts 3,
Notoriety 2, Status 4

Passions: Protect the members of the Ghetto Circle (Duty) 4,
Obtain forgiveness from those wraiths who he could not save
in life (Hope) 4

Arcanoi: Argos 1, Castigate 3, Fatalism 1

Fetters: The camp 5, The street in Prague where Eisenfeld's
synagogue stood 4

Willpower: 8

Pathos: 6

Permanent Corpus: 7

Shadow: The Paranoid

Angst: 5

Thorns: Bad Luck, Death's Sigil, Tainted Relic (the transport
list with Eisenfeld's name on it)

Shadow Passions: Rule the camp with as brutal a hand as the
SS overseers did (Hate) 4, Break the provisions set forth in
the Covenant with Stygia (Deceit) 3, Convince Eisenfeld that
he is a horrible leader and depress him enough to succumb to
Oblivion (Fear) 3

Image: Eisenfeld is a thin, middle-aged, slightly balding man
who looks like everyone's favorite uncle. He has dark hair and
wears a gray three-piece suit with a watch chain in the breast
pocket. The image of the harmless rabbi is completed by the round
glasses which he wears, even in death. Despite his pleasant appear-
ance, Eisenfeld's guilt over his actions in life has manifested itself
as a musty, cloying odor about his person, which becomes stronger
whenever his Shadow appears to gain a bit of ground.

Roleplaying Notes: You are extremely protective of your
position as the leader of the Haunt, not only because of the
responsibility involved, but because you feel that this is the
only way you can come to terms with the crimes you feel you
committed in life. It is the only way you think you can purge
yourself of the remorse that constantly gnaws at you. Although
you are very watchful over both the camp and each wraith in
it, this can become obsessive at times, as dedication can eas-
ily be mistaken for (or lead to) charges of being stubborn and
singleminded, both by Stygia and your fellow Circle wraiths.

Dr. Richard Holvenbach

Ever since he was a little boy, Richard Holvenbach loved
his country. He was German born and bred, the youngest son of a
respected civil servant who served during the Second Empire under
the auspices of the great Chancellor Bismarck. When Richard's
father retired, he moved the family and five-year-old Richard to
their southern home, in the Sudeten mountains of Czechoslovakia.
Then the war came, and Richard lost an older brother at Verdun.
Soon the war was lost, and Richard and his family found themselves,
along with many fellow Germans, cut off from their fatherland, on
the wrong side of the Versailles Treaty's line. Yet Richard never
lost hope that his family, and those Germans who lived around him
would one day become part of Germany again.

When Hitler rose to power, and spoke of rejoining all
Germans under one banner, Richard, now a doctor, listened
and cheered. He had heard some rumors of domestic unrest
in Germany, something about some Jews being harassed,
but thought nothing of it. When Hitler was given control of
Czechoslovakia, Richard Holvenbach was on the streets of
Prague to welcome his tanks. When war came, Richard Hol-
venbach enlisted, becoming a camp doctor.

Richard Holvenbach's entire world was shattered in the summer of 1942, when he was transferred to fill a need for camp doctor at Theresienstadt. His new assignment was the care and treatment of over one hundred SS guards and close to 30,000 imprisoned Jews. The conditions in the camp filled him with revulsion: human beings suffering malnourishment, overcrowding, and being forced to sleep in their own waste, while the comfortable, brutish SS men beat, shot and deported hundreds of people at a time without the slightest twinge of regret. Holvenbach was charged with keeping the inmates just barely healthy enough to break their backs at slave labor or to be ushered onto the transport trains, and the guards in tip-top, Aryan condition to continue their ritual abuse. It shamed him to learn what his country had become, to see what his fellow human beings were doing to one another.

Along with a few dedicated nurses, Dr. Holvenbach worked feverishly to stem the rising tides of disease and death that were swamping Theresienstadt. Disease knew no theory of master races, as both jailer and jailed succumbed to epidemics of cholera and TB that periodically ravaged the population. When Holvenbach was admonished by the SS for not giving primary attention to the guards, he began to hoard supplies of penicillin and other medicines for his Jewish patients. This dangerous practice increased the strain on the doctor, even as he tried to bring word to the outside world of the conditions in the camp. When an International Red Cross delegation arrived on a fact-finding visit in 1944, Holvenbach took one of the delegates aside and told him of the crimes being committed. Alas, his pleas fell on deaf ears.



Realizing that no help would come from the outside, Dr. Richard Holvenbach redoubled his own efforts against the foulness of the ghetto. The struggle lasted until the end of 1944, when he himself finally succumbed to the cholera against which he had so fiercely battled.

Holvenbach's wraith came to Theresienstadt determined to try and save those persons in death whom he could not save in life. Accepted by the primarily Jewish residents of the camp in recognition of his good works when alive, the doctor is a powerful voice in the Ghetto Circle, speaking for those who perished from the conditions inside the barracks (whom he calls his "patients"). Holvenbach is also a central figure in the camp's Redemption program, toiling diligently in death to return those pathetic souls who have become Spectres back to their true selves.

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Driven

Circle: The Ghetto Circle

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 3, Expression 2, Interrogation 2, Intimidation 3

Skills: Etiquette 2, Hypnotism 2, Leadership 2

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 2, Law 1, Linguistics 1, Medicine 5, Poisons 3, Psychology 2, Science 4

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Eidolon 2, Memoriam 1, Notoriety 2, Status 4

Passions: Help Mortwrights achieve Redemption (Love) 4, Represent his constituency of "patients" (Duty) 3

Arcanoi: Castigate 4, Flux 2, Mnemosynis 2, Phantasm 1, Puppetry 1

Fetters: The camp hospital 5

Willpower: 9

Pathos: 8

Permanent Corpus: 8

Shadow: The Workaholic

Angst: 7

Thorns: Doppelganger, Freudian Slip, Tainted Touch

Shadow Passions: Sabotage the Redemption program and use it to create more Spectres (Hate) 4, Foment dissension within the Ghetto Circle about Eisenfeld's integrity and leadership abilities (Lust for Power) 3

Image: Dr. Richard Holvenbach is frozen forever in his forties, a great bear of a man with closely trimmed salt-and-pepper hair and a neat mustache. Even in death, he looks overworked. His bright blue eyes remain fixed in a mask of determination that barely hides a feeling of desperation with his situation.

Despite his size, Holvenbach is a precise man, gentle with his “patients” and others. This has made him an invaluable asset in the Redemption programs undertaken by the Circle.

Roleplaying Notes: Apart from Eisenfeld, you are probably the most powerful wraith in the Circle, and this fact is not lost upon you or your group of “patients.” Because you control the most powerful voting block in the camp, you can sometimes be suspicious of Eisenfeld’s motives, as his exclusive contact with Stygia makes you wonder exactly what he is up to. Although you are mostly a gentle person, and dedicated to your work within the Circle, the Redemption program can seem futile at times. It is at these times that your Shadow’s whispers of doubt creep in.

Jean-Claude LeClerc

Diplomats are practiced in the delicate art of compromise, and Jean-Claude LeClerc was no exception. A former banker with Zurich Internationale, LeClerc was appointed to a diplomatic post with the Swiss government in 1937. His first major assignment was as part of the delegation to the Evian Conference in 1938, where the delegates in attendance debated and eventually refused to make special allowances for Jews fleeing the Nazi regime. Like most present, LeClerc had heard rumors of abuse by the Nazi government, but remained noncommittal when it came to action.

In a few years, LeClerc found himself in Geneva, a city where the intelligence channels of both Axis and Allied countries frequently came together. It was a city where information was freely available to anyone who cared to listen. Now on the executive board of the International Red Cross, Jean-Claude LeClerc was privy to more and more rumors about the treatment of the Jews in Nazi-held lands. Stories of slave labor camps and forced marches traveled along diplomatic channels, along with unthinkable rumors of camps in the east where Jews and others were being slaughtered wholesale.

What LeClerc heard was literally incredible. That a civilized nation in the 20th century could be guilty of such atrocious activity was too much to comprehend. LeClerc could not believe it, did not want to believe it — he decided it must have been some vicious strain of propaganda gone totally out of control. When the executive board of the IRC decided to send a delegation to a few of the concentration camps in order to observe the treatment of prisoners, LeClerc volunteered to go on one of the expeditions, more to quell his own fears than anything else. He was chosen for one of the delegations. Its destination was Theresienstadt.



LeClerc arrived at the ghetto camp with the rest of the delegation in late June 1944, unable to guess at what he might see there. Nothing he had imagined, however, had prepared him for this. The dwellings and streets were clean and well-kept. The mess halls boasted a wait staff and good linen. Small children played soccer in the little square while their adult counterparts enjoyed outdoor concerts and plays in the shadow of the garrison’s steeple. No guards or soldiers were in sight. There was no filth, no overcrowding, nothing like the reports of places like Warsaw or Lodz in Poland or Dachau in Germany. It seemed too good to be true.

When LeClerc visited the infirmary, the attending physician hastily took him aside and told him that he was exactly right — the entire setup was a scam. The delegation was being played the fool by the SS. Theresienstadt was a stopover on the way to Auschwitz, the major killing center. The truth had to be told, the doctor had said, and LeClerc had to do it.

But he did not. Jean-Claude LeClerc returned with the IRC delegation to Switzerland after the visit and could not bring himself to confront what the camp doctor had said. It was too evil, too unbearable to contemplate. He told himself

that the doctor was crazy, or deluded, or a spy, or any number of rationalizations that came to mind on a given day — anything to avoid opening his eyes and looking at the violent picture before him. When the war ended and its legacy came to the fore, LeClercq's self-delusion gave way to self-hatred. Furious at his cowardice before the war and driven to madness by his remorse, he drank himself to death in the winter of 1947.

Jean-Claude LeClercq came to the blackened husk of Theresienstadt a virulently hated man, nearly refused entrance and initially forced into isolation. Dr. Holvenbach has not forgiven LeClercq for his cravenness in life, and has influenced the opinions of many of his "patients" against the IRC delegate. The former banker has dwelt in the shadows of this reminder of his own mortal failings, but with one solitary goal keeping him from Oblivion: to obtain the courage he lacked in life by achieving forgiveness from those whose plight he ignored.

Over time, LeClercq has found some degree of tolerance, if not acceptance, from the wraiths in Theresienstadt. Solomon Eisenfeld has been instrumental in allowing LeClercq to remain within the camp (and some whisper that the two collaborators belong together). The rest of the camp, however, is divided over the issue of the Red Cross wraiths who kept quiet about this hell among the living. Though Eisenfeld may make efforts to accept (and even forgive) wraiths such as Jean-Claude LeClercq, old emotions still bubble to the surface time and again, especially over matters like the insult of the Red Cross visit.

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Curmudgeon

Circle: The Ghetto Circle

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Awareness 2, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intrigue 3, Style 2

Skills: Etiquette 3, Leadership 1, Misdirection 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics 3, Politics 4

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Eidolon 1, Status 1

Passions: Gain acceptance from the Circle, especially from Holvenbach (Desire for Respect) 4, Find the SS men who fooled him and his colleagues and get even (Revenge) 4, Look out for his fellow IRC wraiths and help them to deal with their personal demons (Fraternal Devotion) 3

Arcanoi: Argos 1, Fatalism 2, Intimation 1, Usury 3

Fetters: The camp 5, Red Cross offices at Geneva 3

Willpower: 7

Pathos: 6

Permanent Corpus: 7

Shadow: The Rationalist

Angst: 6

Thorns: Aura of Corruption, Infamy

Shadow Passions: Find and then lead the ghosts of SS to the camp (Treachery) 3, Discredit Holvenbach as payback for his distrust of you (Revenge) 3, Lead Spectres from the Nihil into the camp (Hate) 3

Image: Jean-Claude LeClercq is short, about five-seven, with sallow features and hollow eyes. He looks as if all the trust has drained out of him. He is jaded and cynical from his experiences in life, and neither the Shadowlands nor the hostility of certain wraiths has done much to ameliorate that. LeClercq spends a great deal of time aimlessly roaming the ramparts of the camp, often staring for long periods into the sulfurous clouds bubbling up from the Nihil that marks the Small Fortress outside the walls.

LeClercq is enigmatic to the point of evasiveness. This makes it hard enough for others to simply talk to him about mundane matters, let alone poke through his barriers of self-loathing with genuine offers of help.

Roleplaying Notes: Consumed with guilt, you are usually given to moodiness. This can be off-putting to those who genuinely want to help you. Occasionally you emerge from your shell with offers of assistance, attempting to achieve some sort of personal and worthwhile redemption, but these moments are infrequent — the contempt you receive from people like Dr. Holvenbach is a physical force beating at you, and the position he holds within the camp can at times make the Nihil seem a better (and more appropriate) option for you.

Aaron Dahlcek

Aaron Dahlcek was one of the very first to be sent to Theresienstadt, part of the group of over 300 laborers who came to erect the facilities of the ghetto camp. Dahlcek had been a carpenter in Prague, a large, strong young man with a particular genius for working with his hands, and he had fallen under the hypnotic spell of the "model ghetto" propaganda. He volunteered to go and prepare the camp in the late fall of 1941. For a week after arrival he and his fellow laborers were busy gutting and rebuilding the old barrack houses, the garrison hospital, the mess halls and shower buildings. After a week, the first transport of women, children and the aged arrived to take up residence in these rebuilt structures, their new housings. The arrival of more SS guards and Czech police soon after confirmed for Aaron the truth of the other, darker rumors he had heard fluttering around the streets of Prague: Theresienstadt was a Jewish prison. And like any prison, it had no way out.



Dahlcek was a worker, and work he did, performing back-breaking labor under the gaze of SS gun barrels around the camp, in the forests nearby, and often far away from Theresienstadt. One morning before sunup, Dahlcek was roused out of bed by the camp commandant himself and crammed into the back of a truck, where he and 30 other prisoners were driven for what seemed like an eternity to the still-smoldering ruins of a little village named Lidice. They were herded out of the truck to a scene of burned-out buildings, torn-up streets, and crushed and broken human bodies. For the next 36 hours, without food or rest, Dahlcek and the others buried the families of the little community in mass graves. The workers broke and burned down anything left standing and effectively erased the hamlet from the earth. The men were then herded back into the trucks and driven back to the camp, under orders not to speak of this to anyone under pain of death.

Though he kept silent, Aaron Dahlcek could not erase the memory of what he had been forced to do. In the spring of 1944, Dahlcek was part of what was left of the disease-scarred labor force that was ordered to prepare Theresienstadt for a visit by a committee from the Red Cross. Aaron Dahlcek constructed outdoor gazebos, planted flowers in public squares, and in short rebuilt Theresienstadt again. He had the faintest ember of hope that conditions might improve after the Red Cross came, but

when the delegation of outsiders left, Aaron Dahlcek was set to undoing all that he had done. He had worked to build nothing but a sideshow for the SS to fool the outsiders. Thoughts of Lidice came back to haunt him, and he realized that he had to get out. Two weeks after the delegation left, while working with another detail in the forests outside the camp, Aaron Dahlcek attempted his escape. He tore through the thick woods barely ahead of his SS pursuers and their Dobermans, and was finally run down by the soldiers. Taken back to the camp, he was executed by firing squad outside the Usti barracks at dawn the next day.

Aaron Dahlcek has never felt totally comfortable with the ghostly community existing in Theresienstadt. Every crumbling structure in the camp mocks his work in life, stabs at his guilt, and reminds him that it was his own hands that helped to create this place. He has found sympathy and support from an unlikely source, the young woman called Butterfly, and has developed (very private) feelings of affection toward her. However, her symbiosis with the emotional pool of the camp is lost on him.

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Circle: The Ghetto Circle

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Scrounge 3

Skills: Crafts 5, Drive 2, Empathy 1, Melee 1, Repair 3

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 2, Occult 1, Science 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 1, Eidolon 2, Haunts 2, Mentor 1, Notoriety 1

Passions: Protect Butterfly (Love) 4, Assist Holvenbach in the Redemption program (Hope) 3

Arcanoi: Flux 4, Inhabit 2, Moliat 2

Fetters: The camp 5, Tool kit 3, Lidice 3

Willpower: 8

Pathos: 8

Permanent Corpus: 7

Shadow: The Perfectionist

Angst: 6

Thorns: Shadow Call, Pact of Doom, Tainted Touch

Shadow Passions: Abandon Butterfly (Hate) 4, Convince Dahlcek that his labors made everything here his fault, and goad him into accepting Oblivion (Fear) 3

Image: Dahlcek looks 30, a simple man with black hair and eyes and a strong face sitting atop a burly frame. Like Dr. Holvenbach, Aaron is measured and patient in his movements despite his strong frame, befitting one who was a carpenter. Despite his awkwardness with the Circle, he always gives his full attention and

concentration to the words of his fellow wraiths. Furthermore, he delivers on his promises — he knows no other way of behaving.

Roleplaying Notes: You are wary of people such as Eisenfeld and Holvenbach, who can appear more concerned with sniping at each other than working toward the betterment of the camp. You have always been an honorable man, and the fact that you were, however unwillingly, part of such deceptions as the eradication of Lidice and the erection of the “show camp” scars you. The fact that much of what you built in life has crossed over in death precludes any arrogance on your part, even if you were the sort given to such posturing. It is probably what caught the attention of Butterfly, and why the two of you have become friends. Stay focused within yourself and your own code of behavior, for the fear of losing Butterfly because of deviousness or politicizing is too painful for you to contemplate.

Story Ideas

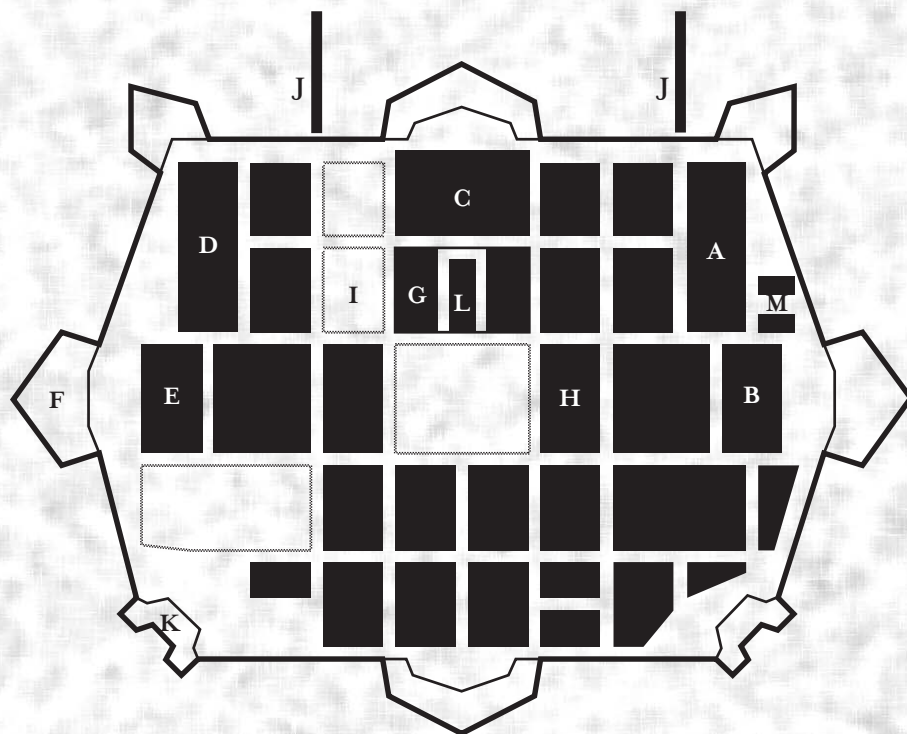
- Dr. Holvenbach’s “patients” have captured a Mortwright and ask the characters to assist them in enacting a Redemption upon the bound Spectre. In the middle of the process, however, something goes wrong and the creature is destroyed. The characters’ suspicions are aroused, even more so when Holvenbach accuses them of sabotage. The characters must clear their own names as they work to uncover the truth of why the experiment failed. Matters are further

complicated by the arrival of the wraiths of the Mortwright’s family. How will they react to the news of what their loved one had become — and the fact that he has been destroyed?

- A troubled Eisenfeld approaches the characters secretly and makes them aware of his suspicions that there exists a mole within the Ghetto Circle, someone who is in contact with a clandestine group of wraiths who are former SS men. The characters must attempt to discover the identity of the double agent before he or she can damage the integrity of the citadel. However, Eisenfeld himself is in no position to support the Circle, as the suspicion about his dealings with the Stygian liason have come under fire.

- Butterfly and Dahlcek have grown very worried about LeClercq, who seems even moodier than usual after another confrontation with Dr. Holvenbach. Looking to talk with him, they discover that he has left Theresienstadt and taken a few of his former Red Cross fellows with him. They ask the characters to accompany them outside the walls to locate LeClercq and his party before they do something foolish or self-destructive and convince them to return to the Circle. If they do manage to persuade them, there is also the matter of dealing with the very vocal Holvenbach, who wants LeClercq gone by any means necessary. Can the characters tread the line between compassion and justice, or must they choose one or the other? And what will LeClercq’s Shadow, poisoned by self-hatred, have to say on the matter?

Plan of the Theresienstadt Ghetto within the Inner Ramparts.



- A Magdeburg Barracks; the seat of Jewish Administration
- B Hanover Barracks
- C Vrchlabí Barracks; the Central Hospital
- D Dresden Barracks
- E Podmokly Barracks; later German billets
- F Łódź Barracks; checking station, and German stores in the later period
- G SS Headquarters in the early period; later Post Office
- H SS Headquarters and prison in the later period
- I Children’s pavilion during the embellishment
- J Roads leading to the Small Fortress
- K Building yard
- L Church of the Resurrection
- M Workshops

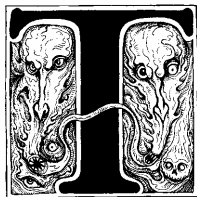




Behind the Wall: The Ghetto at Warszawa

by Robert Hatch

*Die! For my mother, for my father, for my children, for our life!
I am aiming at you! Oh God, please let the shot hit its target!*
— diary of Noemi Szac-Wainkranc, a Ghetto fighter



Here is a picture with which the reader is, perhaps, familiar: a small boy, hands up and eyes wild with terror, staring wildly ahead as Nazi soldiers train their rifles on him.

This picture, like many of World War II's less savory photographs, depicts the denizens of, and daily life in, that Nazi-

created inferno known as the Warsaw Ghetto. And while the boy in the photo survived the Nazi juggernaut, all too many of his schoolmates, friends, teachers and relatives did not.

Some of those less fortunate residents still haunt the area into which the Nazis crammed them like rats. For the Restless denizens of the Warsaw Ghetto, the motto "Never again" is a slogan that they will hurl defiantly — even into the maw of Oblivion itself.



History

You are going into battle against the dregs of humanity... the Jew-Bolshevists... You must be relentless in exterminating this scum....

— General Jürgen Stroop, to his troops, during the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt

Prelude to Purgatory



On September 1, 1939, the Nazi *Fall Weiss* blitzkrieg cut a swath of carnage through the Polish countryside. The gallant Polish troops — with their horses and their sabers — found themselves hopelessly overmatched against the Panzers of the Wehrmacht and the Stukas of the Luftwaffe. By September 17, Soviet troops rolled in from the east, and Poland was as good as conquered.

Poland's capital city, Warsaw, was not so easily bested. The city held out until September 27. The citizens' defense was urged on by Warsaw's courageous mayor, Stefan Starzynski, who broadcast anti-Nazi speeches from a mobile transmitter — at least until he was captured and hurled into a concentration camp. There Starzynski was brutally tortured and finally shot in 1943.

And so Warsaw, cultural center for three million Jews and home to over one-tenth that number, found itself firmly in the grip of the Nazi fist. Gestapo swaggered down the ancient cobblestone lanes, citizens were forced to register for bread cards, and everywhere sprouted the signs saying VERBOTEN — “forbidden.”

Warsaw's 300,000 — soon to be 500,000 — Jews shortly discovered that as far as they were concerned, very little was not *verboten*. In December 1939, the Nazis required all Jews over the age of 12 to wear armbands — but not “too high” or “too low,” lest the wearer receive a beating. As the invading regime tightened its hold, the list of things that were made *verboten* lengthened exponentially. Education was *verboten* to Jews (illegal home schools were still operated by courageous educators, who were often shot for their pains). One profession after another became *verboten*: publishing, law, medicine. Business ownership was *verboten* — Jews were forced to sell their assets to Nazi profiteers at bargain rates or simply stripped of them outright. Ritual slaughter of livestock became *verboten*, rendering kosher meat virtually impossible to obtain.

Even the basic necessities of life eventually became *verboten*. In Nazi-occupied Poland, not all bread cards were honored equally: While Aryan Poles received a ration of 2,500 calories per day (no banquet, but adequate for existence), Warsaw's Jews were forced to make do with 184. (By way of illustrating just how scanty this ration is, the author is eating a Snickers bar and drinking a Mountain Dew while writing this passage, and he cannot help but notice that this snack's calorie content is approximately double that of a Warsaw Jew's daily ration during the occupation.)

Obviously, this meager fare had to be supplemented to avoid starvation. And indeed, a booming black market sprang up in Warsaw's underground. Wealthy Jews and those in service to the Gestapo could often obtain comfortable rations and goods. Their poorer counterparts were forced to squabble for bread in the streets, eat the bark from trees or, all too often, starve to death. The sight of emaciated bodies lying in the gutter, often stripped naked by people desperately seeking clothes for barter or warmth, became a common one in Warsaw's Jewish areas.

With all of these things *verboten*, it was inevitable that some Jews would deliberately or inadvertently violate the Nazis' rules. The Nazis responded to these transgressions with punishments inconceivable from a people deeming themselves civilized. Jews were beaten or forced to perform such humiliating spectacles as cleaning the streets with their tongues — and these “transgressors” were the lucky ones. Others were taken to Warsaw's Pawiak Prison and mowed down by firing squad, or simply shot like dogs in the streets.

Worse yet was the policy of collective responsibility. When Jakub Pinchus Zylbring, a petty thief, shot a Polish policeman, all of the residents of his flat were shot in retaliation.

But the Nazis had better things to do than oversee the conduct of this subhuman Jewish scum, and so they appointed a council of Jews to govern their brethren. This council, the *Judenrat*, was a group of 24 men chosen largely for their passivity and servility to the Gestapo; its *Obmann* (elder), Adam Czerniakow, was a former engineer with absolutely no standing in the Jewish community prior to his appointment.

Ostensibly created to govern Warsaw's Jews, the *Judenrat* proved to be a mere tool to facilitate their brutalization. Using the *Judenrat* as the thinnest of blinds, the Gestapo and SS were able to register the city's Jews in preparation for their eventual deportation to the ghetto — and from there to the death camps. The *Judenrat* also enrolled people for periods of forced labor, although even in this regard it was hopelessly compromised by wealthy Jews, who bribed their way out of their shifts at the expense of their poorer brethren.

The Wall Rises

During the year 1940, Warsaw's citizens, Aryan and Jew alike, apprehensively watched the construction of a great red brick wall that enclosed an entire neighborhood. This wall crept forward implacably, shutting off a section of the city. The citizens of Warsaw, particularly the Jews, could not help but notice that the neighborhood thus surrounded was one of the poorest and most squalid areas, and one into which many Jews had already been forced; the Nazis tried to quell the rumors of a ghetto by saying that they planned to use the neighborhood and its barbed-wire-covered wall for training urban commandos.

This lie was not one of the Nazis' better ones. Few were surprised when on October 3rd of that year — Rosh Hashanah — the Nazis finally made the long-anticipated announcement: All Jews must be in the ghetto by October 31 or face deportation.

And so October of 1940 hosted a bizarre flurry of activity, as the city's half-million Jews scrambled to move themselves and their possessions into a 100-block, 27,000-apartment neighborhood. Oftentimes forced to leave their possessions behind, the panicked, destitute Jews were forced to burrow into cramped dens, shared with several other families. Other families were forced by necessity to separate so that every family member might have a roof over her head.

The worst incident, perhaps, was the clearing of the hospital. The Nazis insisted that the patients of Warsaw's Jewish hospital, even the critically ill, be transported to the squalid Ghetto hospital across town; however, they refused to provide ambulances for the move. Doctors were forced to watch helplessly as patients suffered and died in transit. The worst was yet to come, however: Once the ghetto hospital was reached, so inadequate were the facilities it contained that the living often had to share beds with the dead.

And so November dawned, and the long-dreaded Ghetto had become reality. 500,000 people — 30% of the city's population — had been crammed into approximately 2.5% of the city's area.

The Hidden Horror

Statistics of America's unfortunate pastime of automotive shootings have revealed an interesting phenomenon: A disproportionate number of drivers shot at are behind tinted windows. From this data, many psychologists hypothesize that being behind a screen, hidden from view, renders one less of a person and more of a potential target.

The Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto would not likely argue with this logic. For behind that red, wire-topped wall, shrouded from the sight of their Aryan neighbors, the Jews of Warsaw became the victims of atrocities heretofore undreamed of.





Squadrons of SS would dog-trot down the Ghetto streets, randomly beating, looting and raping. Even worse, some SS would drive cars barreling through the Ghetto's congested thoroughfares, running over pedestrians for sport. If this was not sufficiently entertaining, Nazis would point to random passersby, betting each other that they could shoot the target in the hand, the knee, the eye, or the brain.


Even worse than the SS, if possible, were the members of the OH (*Ondnungs-Huter*), the Jewish police appointed to "patrol" the Ghetto. Often apostates and anti-Semites who resented being categorized and contained with the Jews they so despised, the members of the OH added personal vindictiveness to their masters' capricious cruelty. They were nicknamed "dachsunds" by the Ghetto dwellers, an allusion to the Yiddish proverb, "The dog is more vicious than the master."

The Ghetto itself was divided into three sections. The Central Ghetto contained the *Judenrat* building, the SS headquarters, and the Transferstelle rail station (soon to be renamed the *Umschlagplatz*, the dreaded "Reloading Place" from which Jews were deported to the death camps). The Produc-

tive Ghetto contained the factories of such Nazi profiteers as Toebbens and Schultz. The Brushmakers' District contained shops which produced brushes for the *Wehrmacht*. On the periphery of these "civilized" areas was the "Wild Ghetto," a frightful no-man's-land of bombed-out tenement shells without water, heat, electricity or gas. The Wild Ghetto was a haven for criminals and, later, anti-Nazi partisans.

Travel into and out of the Ghetto was strictly controlled. Possession of an *Ausweis* — a pass indicating that the bearer was a registered worker in a German-owned factory — was an absolute necessity; those unfortunates who did not possess an *Ausweis* were subject to all sorts of ghastly fates, including immediate deportation to a death camp. Anyone caught trying to sneak into or out of the Ghetto would be lucky to escape with a fine or beating, and most likely would be shot.

Despite this prohibition, Warsaw's already thriving black market boomed. Faced with the prospect of starvation, many Ghetto dwellers risked Nazi wrath to smuggle food and goods into the ghetto. At one point, live oxen were smuggled into the Ghetto through a combination of inclined ramps and bribed



guards. An ingenious system of pipes was created whereby precious milk could be poured from the Aryan section of the city, to flow downhill all the way to the Ghetto.

It was not enough. Life in the hellishly overcrowded Ghetto became an exercise in the very Social Darwinism so espoused by the Reich's scientists. While the Ghetto's wealthy (and there were still a few, mostly collaborators with the Gestapo) ate at restaurants, drank the night away at saloons and even attended nightclub shows, their less fortunate brethren literally starved to death outside. Furthermore, the combination of openly rotting corpses and lack of sanitation engendered swarms of body lice, which in turn precipitated epidemic outbreaks of typhus.

"Death to the Nazis!"

As Nazi terror tactics intensified and conditions worsened, an undercurrent of anger simmered among Warsaw's downtrodden. Frustrated by Nazi oppression, and even moreso by the tacit complicity of the Judenrat and the overt brutality of the OH, various militant groups formed among the underground.

Inspired by the bravery of Byelorussia's Jews, who had forced the Nazis to retreat — albeit temporarily — from their soil, Jews attempted to cobble together a resistance movement much as they had fashioned working windows from broken shards. Some Jews attempted to join up with their Aryan brethren in the *Armja Krajowa*; unfortunately, the Polish underground was as antisemitic as the Nazis they opposed, refusing to aid the Jews and occasionally even betraying them to their erstwhile opponents.

So the Jews were forced to look to themselves. Zionist and Socialist underground newspapers sprang up, urging armed resistance. Individual Jews orchestrated a few counterattacks against SS oppressors and Jewish collaborators, even going so far as to shoot the chief of the OH police. The Nazi response was predictably brutal. Tipped off by spies planted in the Ghetto, SS soldiers swept through the Ghetto, shooting scores of Jews in random purges.

The militant feeling among Warsaw's Jews was exacerbated by the brutal winter of 1941. Forced to live in squalid tenements, often with no heat, in subzero temperatures, even the meekest of Jews were forced to commit illegal acts simply to survive. Those who refused to do so joined the corpses already clogging the gutters. Nightly, the streets of Warsaw rang with the plaintive cries of orphaned children, inadequately clad and without food.

In late 1941 a potential savior came to the Ghetto. The great chemist-soldier Pinya Kartin, a war hero and member of the *Polska Partja Robotnicza* (Poland's Communist Party),

smuggled himself into the Ghetto and began the task of training Warsaw's partisans. Under the alias "Andrew Schmidt," Kartin instructed young Jews in urban fighting, unarmed combat and other techniques. Under "Schmidt's" eye, homemade grenades and Molotovs were laid away for the day of revolt.

The glimmer of hope didn't last. On April 17, 1942, a particularly vicious Gestapo purge took place. Fifty-two Jews — including two- and three-year-olds — were shot in the streets. Similar outrages continued until Kartin was discovered and captured on May 30, 1942. The hero was taken to Pawiak Prison and executed, as so many others had been before him.

But Kartin's bravery had inspired many of Warsaw's youth. One in particular, a young man by the name of Mordechai Anielewicz, would take up Kartin's mantle...until the bitter end.

Operation Reinhard

You have no choice for survival but to fight! Once on the road to Treblinka, you are doomed! Resist!...Make the ghetto another Stalingrad!

— anti-Nazi leaflet distributed in the Warsaw Ghetto

That end would not be long in coming. On January 20, 1942, at a mansion in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee, a conference of the Nazi Party's highest officials met to discuss the "Jewish question." The agreed-upon "Final Solution" was the complete annihilation of the Jewish race. Reichsführer Himmler ordered the transformation of several concentration-camp facilities into "death camps": areas specifically designed for the large-scale murder of Jews.

Warsaw held the largest group of Jews remaining in Europe, and so it was only a matter of time before the Final Solution made its way to the gates of the city. Operation Reinhard was essentially, a death sentence against the remaining inhabitants of the Ghetto (400,000 — of the original half-million, 20% had perished from starvation, disease or random violence), and was put into effect on July 18, 1942.

Operation Reinhard — as the Nazis explained it to the Judenrat — consisted of the "resettlement" of Jews. All Jews except the Judenrat themselves, bearers of *Ausweisen*, and the immediate families of such privileged individuals were to be transported to "labor camps" to assist the Reich's war effort. This relocation would consist of 60,000 persons — mostly the ghetto's lower elements, the members of the Judenrat reassured themselves — and it could only help alleviate the horrendous overcrowding....

And so, with the blessing of their puppet leaders, Warsaw's Jews were herded to the Umschlagplatz station and placed on trains going to Treblinka, to Sobibor, to Chelmno, and to Auschwitz.

Did Adam Czerniakow, the ineffectual *Obmann* of the *Judenrat*, discover the true meaning of Operation Reinhard, or had he simply tired of his contemptible position? No one knows exactly what combination of factors led to his suicide on July 23, or to the final note — “To the Last” — which the discoverers of his body found beneath his corpse. He was swiftly replaced with one Marek Lichtenbaum, a Nazi stooge, and then Operation Reinhard proceeded in earnest.

The members of the resistance movements, more cynical than their supposed leaders, swiftly discovered exactly what “resettlement” entailed. Under the leadership of young Mordechai Anielewicz, the ZOB (*Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa* — Jewish Fighting Organization) came into existence on July 28, 1942. It swiftly began a propaganda campaign urging Jews to resist resettlement at all costs.

But the Nazis would not be denied. Operation Reinhard continued throughout that long bleak year, eventually claiming many more than the predetermined 60,000 sacrificial lambs. Bands of *askaris* — Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Latvian anti-semitic thugs — were sent into the ghetto and sicced on the populace. The allegedly sacrosanct *Ausweis* holders had their cards ripped up in front of their faces. Even the OH police frantically rounded up Jew after Jew, spurred on by a lethal quota: An OH member who did not bring in at least seven Jews a day would take a place on the cattle cars instead.

And so the *Umschlagplatz* turned into a pen of horror, as the Warsaw ghetto’s masses were beaten, shoved and pushed into their mobile coffins.

The January Days

Mein Gott! Die Juden haben Waffen! (My God! The Jews have weapons!)


— screamed by the first Nazi soldier to die in the Ghetto Revolt

Anielewicz was growing frustrated. Though his ZOB had scored some victories against *askaris* and even against the SS during the winter of ‘42-’43, a combination of the Polish underground’s stubborn unwillingness to help and his people’s stubborn unwillingness to believe the death-camp stories kept his group relatively impotent.

By now the Ghetto had undergone a dramatic change. Gone were the teeming swarms of humanity; most had probably already gone “up the chimney” at Treblinka or Auschwitz. Of Warsaw’s original half-million Jews, a scant 60,000 remained.

The ZOB could waste no more time. The guerrilla attacks began sporadically, tentatively, but relentlessly. Anielewicz’s lieutenant, Israel Kanak, shot the chief of the OH on August 25, 1942, and this action was followed by a rash of attacks against known Gestapo informers. On September 1, the ZOB used a





Russian air raid as a screen to attack a German convoy, stealing needed weapons and ammunition. In between, the ZOB and its allied movements did everything they could to obtain weapons, or money to buy black-market weapons.

Assisting Anielewecz, though remaining independent, was an undisciplined mob led by the crazed freedom fighter Moishe the Bolshevik. This band laired in the burned-out Wild Ghetto and mounted savage guerrilla attacks on Nazi invaders.

Anielewecz frantically trained his fighters throughout that long fall and winter. When they were not training, the members of the ZOB were turning the Ghetto into a deathtrap. An ingenious series of underground bunkers was constructed, and tenement buildings were linked by hidden second-story walkways. The Ghetto fighters smuggled themselves and their goods throughout the city via the noxious medium of the city sewers (the persistent rumor that Warsaw's Nosferatu vampires aided the ZOB has been neither proved nor disproved). Fighting bunkers, mines, secret tunnels...by the beginning of 1943, the Ghetto had been meticulously transformed into a lethal maze.

This was a good thing for the defenders. Near the beginning of '43, Reichsführer Himmler ordered that the Warsaw Ghetto be completely liquidated by February 15. On January 18, Nazi soldiers invaded the ghetto to begin the last roundups...

...and instead met a hail of firebombs, bullets and grenades. From all sides Warsaw's beleaguered Jews poured down their vengeance upon their Nazi tormentors. With the aid of a homemade grenade, 17-year-old Emily Landau was the first to take down a Nazi — and the first to die, ripped apart by rifle fire. In no time, the Ghetto had become a battleground, and, for the Nazis, a harrowing deathtrap.

Anielewecz personally directed the defense and fought like a demon. Eyewitness accounts tell of him battling his way out of a Nazi encirclement, smashing through the Germans' ranks as though he were an incarnate hero from the pages of the Americans' comics. It was he who provided the rallying point behind which every one of Warsaw's Jews hurled themselves.

On January 20, 1943, the Nazis retreated to the Aryan section of the city. The Warsaw Ghetto had won the first round.

Blood on the Door

Let's give the Nazis a real Passover welcome.

— Mordechai Anielewecz

Himmler was not amused. *Untermenschen* swine dared to defy the Reich thus?

Indeed, defy it the ZOB did, all of those last few glorious months. Weapons, food and other essentials had been stockpiled for a siege, or a raid. Groups of ZOB snipers turned

the nighttime Ghetto into a terrifying jungle for Nazi troops, and ZOB soldiers sneaked into the Aryan section to beard the Nazi tiger in its lair. In the Wild Ghetto, the ragtag "troops" of Moishe the Bolshevik harried SS men who tried to patrol those pitch-dark streets.

The SS, of course, would not suffer the "Yids" to defy them so. On February 16 — one day after the last Jew was supposed to have been on the train to Treblinka — Himmler sent in more troops, under the direction of the iron-nerved General Jürgen Stroop. To his credit, Stroop was a fearless warrior and a relentless opponent. Of course, it didn't hurt that his courage and tenacity were supplemented by 3,000 troops armed with tanks, flamethrowers and machine-guns, or that his opponents were a mob of 600 or so, armed with pistols and homemade Molotovs.

On Passover, April 19, the reinforced Nazi army reinvaded the Ghetto...and was met by an attack dwarfing the ferocity of the January revolt. Molotovs doused the SS vanguard in flames. ZOB gunmen sniped from hidden ambush points. Grenades sprayed deadly shrapnel among the SS ranks.

And once again, the Nazis retreated. The flustered colonel in charge of the operation ran flapping to General Stroop to report his failure. "The Jews are everywhere!" he cried. "They strike at us from all corners! The troops are terrified!"

Stroop laughed, lit a cigarette, and went to the Ghetto to oversee the assault personally. Unflinching amid a hail of ZOB bullets, Stroop rallied his troops...

...and, in the end, that proved to be that. The glorious, hopeless battle continued hour by hour, block by block, alley by alley. Against the ZOB's homemade cocktails and pistols, Stroop threw poison gas, flamethrowers, and even dive bombers. Slowly, methodically, Stroop directed his followers to burn down the Ghetto, building by building. Those partisans who were not flushed out by the flames — or leapt to their death to escape them — were "smoked" out of their underground bunkers through the use of poison gas.

On May 8, 1943, Mordechai Anielewecz died defending the ZOB command bunker at Mila 18. He was 24 years old.

With Anielewecz's death, the heart went out of the ZOB. Yet they fought on...and on...and on... And on May 16, 1943, Stroop announced the liquidation of the Ghetto.

There was nothing left. Behind the red brick wall where a half-million had lived and struggled and died for three years, Nazi tanks rolled over a flat desert of rubble. In 27 days — longer than it had taken to conquer the entire country of Poland — the Ghetto had been razed to the ground. The greatest battle of European Jewry was over.

Obviously there was no need for the *Judenrat* anymore; as reward for their faithful service, the SS had the remaining



members of the *Judenrat* gunned down and their corpses tossed into the sewers.

The survivors were rounded up, herded onto the trains and sent to Auschwitz, Treblinka, and all the other abattoirs. And the war went on — and in many ways the ruin of the Ghetto served as a harbinger of what was to come to the Reich, in a time not so distant. But the Warsaw Ghetto had ceased to play a part in the lands of the living.

Geography — Skinlands



Warsaw today is a would-be cosmopolis trying as best it may to heal the wounds inflicted by over 50 years of occupation. The populace, by and large, is more interested in obtaining Levi's and Coca-Cola than in dredging up yet more of the city's past pain. Then, too, decades of domination by a state which, among other things, allowed the existence of *refuseniks* has done little to increase awareness of and sympathy for the Ghetto fighters' struggle.

Despite this, the Ghetto has not permitted itself to be ignored. Though the Ghetto itself was razed to the ground, a few monuments have arisen to mark its passing. The *Judenrat* building has been restored, and a plaque describing its history erected. This site is often flooded by swarms of Warsaw's poorer dybbuks, who cluster around tourists or idealistic college students, seeking a dribble of Pathos.

On Gesia Street, near the site of the Jewish Cemetery where Adam Czerniakow was buried, sculptor Natan Rappoport erected a monument to the Ghetto Revolt. It was consecrated in 1970 with a speech from Yitzhak Zuckerman, Anielewecz' friend and second-in-command. If nothing else, Anielewecz was thankful for the chance to say good-bye.

At 18 Mila, formerly the site of the ZOB command bunker, a memorial to the organization's struggles stands. It is simple and austere, as is perhaps inevitable for something constructed under the Communists' watchful eyes — but it is enough for Anielewecz, who likes to come here, light a phantasmal cigarette, and brood wistfully amid the darkness.

But really, when all is said and done, the Nazis did a quite thorough job in destroying the Ghetto and its residents. The true monument to the Ghetto fighters' struggle lies all around, yet invisible. If the living perhaps wish to forget the travails of the Warsaw Ghetto, the Dead will not be so easily dismissed.

Geography — Shadowlands



Unlike the sprawling morass that is Auschwitz, the Necropolis that is the Warsaw Ghetto adheres roughly to the boundaries that defined it in the Skinlands. Relic tenements teeter above narrow, filth-choked alleys and winding labyrinths of streets, much as they did between 1940 and 1943. This neat concordance was made possible by General Jürgen Stroop's block-by-block razing of the Ghetto, which for all practical purposes blasted the entire community headlong into the Shadowlands.

All the places of suffering and resistance stand, with only the occasional hole to mark the effects of the Nazi shelling. Here, at 26 Grzibovska Street, is the building where the *Judenrat* took its orders. There, at 18 Mila, is the ZOB command bunker where Mordechai Anielewecz died fighting. Pawiak Prison, the Umschlagplatz, the fighting bunkers...all stand, eternal monuments to the sorrow of the Dead.

The Dybbuks of Warsaw



Warsaw's Ghetto Dead mingle little with their Aryan counterparts on the other side. The Poles were perfectly content to see them behind their wall in life, and so there they will stay in death. A few Ghetto dybbuks, particularly the black marketers of the Wild Ghetto, maintain relationships with outside wraiths. For the most part, however, the Ghetto Dead are a taciturn, insular breed. They will not make the mistake of trust again.

Not all of the Ghetto's victims became Restless, of course, and many died after having been deported to one death camp or another. Still, the Ghetto Fetters a fair number of dybbuks, particularly for such a small area. Anielewecz estimates that about 20,000 Dead call the Ghetto home.

These dybbuks divide themselves into several groups. Predominant and preeminent are the wraiths loyal to the ZOB and Mordechai Anielewecz. These partisans are considered acutely Renegade by the Hierarchy, but the Partition Accords and Anielewecz's own formidable power stay the Deathlords' talons for now. The ZOB dybbuks seek to keep Warsaw a self-contained community and protect it against outside incursion. Privately, Anielewecz and his



top aides discuss a goal of forcing the recognition of the Ghetto as an independent Dark Kingdom (as opposed to the bizarre twilight status enjoyed by the areas liberated under the Covenant of the Millions), but this is never discussed outside of Anielewecz' innermost circle of advisors. The ZOB remembers Gestapo spies all too well, and distrusts the Hierarchy even more.

Many residents of the Ghetto, of course, were not fighters, but individuals trying as best they could to survive and ensure their families' survival. Those of this breed who became dybbuks after death are most concerned with finding lost family members and reconciling their earthly ties. They live in the flats of the Central Ghetto, often smiling wistfully at Quick passersby who remind them of lost parent, siblings, friends and children.

As with any Ghetto, of course, Warsaw had its desperate inhabitants. The beggars, the orphans and the starvelings are represented here as well, often forlornly roaming the streets where they collapsed. To look at some of these emaciated wrecks, one would think them dead in truth, for surely such faces can belong only to corpses. Only the feral eyes shining above jaundiced, concave cheeks betray any signs of Restless "life." A bit of Pathos, a dollop of Usury, and the ghost of a

beggar-child will smile at the alms-giver from ectoplasmic mouths rendered toothless by scurvy.

Unfortunately, these wretches often fall prey to Warsaw's true bottom feeders. The Ghetto knew its share of opportunists: In its congested streets, persons of learning and respectability were forced to bump shoulders with thieves, criminals, profiteers and smugglers. This continues in death. Such rogues cruise the narrow alleys and secret tunnels like sharks, ruthlessly sniffing out Pathos and bludgeoning it from those wraiths weaker than they.

Even worse are the snatcher gangs. There are few materials with which to make goods in the Ghetto; most of the neighborhood's native relics have already appeared and few others will be coming. And so every once in a while, an orphaned beggar boy disappears from the Shadowlands streets, and a factory has an extra two weeks' worth of fodder, and the Ghetto machine grinds on.

The Wall

In the Shadowlands the Wall towers up and up, stretching on and on and on. In life the Wall kept the Jews of Warsaw in; in death it keeps their enemies out.



The Shadowlands Wall is a monstrous, Gothic edifice of endless black bricks, resembling one of the great medieval structures from Meyrink's *The Golem*. Travelers who stare overlong at the black bricks might discern the faintest of patterns marring the glassy surface: Rorschach blots which a very active imagination might be able to solidify into anguished faces, groping hands or contorted bodies. And they would be correct, for a few Nazis crossed the Shroud on the wrong side of the Wall, and their fate was not a pleasant one.

Most of Warsaw's dybbuks view the Wall with mixed emotions — it embodies both their strength and their oppression. Nonetheless, they need it; Spectres from Aryan Warsaw and the countryside have raided the Ghetto, hurling their Corpora against the brick in a terrifying if futile attempt to batter through. The dybbuks of Warsaw have learned Jürgen Stroop's lessons well, and so the Spectres are repelled, while those who are captured merely serve to reinforce the barricade they so desperately tried to breach.

The Sewers

The noxious sewers through which the guerrillas of the ZOB stole are still patrolled by their Restless counterparts. Now,

however, the vigilance has a different purpose. Anielewecz has heard tales of the Spectres' Labyrinth, and fears that the next assault on the ghetto may come from below.

The Central Ghetto

The Central Ghetto contained the institutions of Warsaw's Jews...and of their oppressors. It was from these blocks that the *Judenrat* council tried to regulate the lives of half a million, and it was from here that the SS so efficiently murdered them.

The Central Ghetto stands in Warsaw's Shadowlands to this day, more or less perfectly preserved. Now, of course, it houses the ZOB government, and at their insistence Warsaw's dybbuks have turned it into a formidable fortress. Mazes of tunnels, bunkers and passages provide ZOB members without Argos access to nearly any part of the Ghetto in minutes. Darksteel grates block Spectral entrance, while relic barricades stoutly defend the streets against any spillover from Aryan Warsaw's wraiths.

At 26 Grzibovska Street sits the headquarters of the *Judenrat*. Recently restored in the Skinlands, the building serves as a Pathos trough for the dybbuks, though many who partake of its fare complain that emotions “filtered” through the *Judenrat* are weak and muted (like the men whom the building memorializes, the dybbuks mutter).

Also in the Central Ghetto is the Umschlagsplatz. Though the station is a rich wellspring of emotion, Anielewecz discourages extensive feeding from this site: The Pathos garnered from this hive of misery is a dark banquet indeed. Nonetheless, all too many of Warsaw’s desperate dead swarm to the Umschlagplatz by night, basking in the effluvia of terror and despair. Warsaw’s Spectres — and there are more than the ZOB would like to believe — couldn’t be happier.

The Productive Ghetto/Brushmakers’ District

The Productive Ghetto whirs day and night with the sounds of industry, as busy dybbuks labor on forges and looms adapted to do the work of the Dead. Nowadays, of course, these wraiths labor for themselves, not for the likes of Toebeans and Schultz.

In theory, all denizens of the Ghetto are to receive the fruits of the factories’ ectoplasmic labors. In practice, materials are exceedingly scarce, and this scarcity is fueled by Ghetto dybbuks’ distrustful refusal to enter into diplomatic relations with *goyim*. Most of the Productive Ghetto’s labors must necessarily go to the ZOB and to those who perform useful functions in the community. The street beggars, the grafters, the hustlers...well, Warsaw’s laborers are sorry for them, but perhaps on Purimfest there will be a surplus.

And so in the mazy alleys of the Productive Ghetto, a thriving black market has sprung up. Unscrupulous workers filch forged or Moliated goods from the communal piles and sell them to the shadow merchants, who in turn profiteer them to Warsaw’s bottom feeders.

The Wild Ghetto

And then there is the Wild Ghetto: that trackless labyrinth of teetering tenements and black alleys where even ZOB dybbuks fear to go. Most Restless, preferring the relative comfort of the Central and Productive Ghettos, leave the Wild Ghetto to time and inevitable decay.

This may be one of Anielewecz’s few mistakes. Certain of Warsaw’s less savory elements are known to lair deep in the Wild Ghetto, and rumors of entire Circles of “hidden dybbuks” occasionally drift through the Ghetto’s factories and markets.

Those incautious dybbuks who have ventured into the Wild Ghetto speak of feeling watched, and some go so far as to say that the very buildings and streets shift before and behind them, disorienting them and preventing egress. Then, too, there are the sightings: half-seen glimpses of bizarre Phantasies and twisted shapes that can only be Nephwracks.

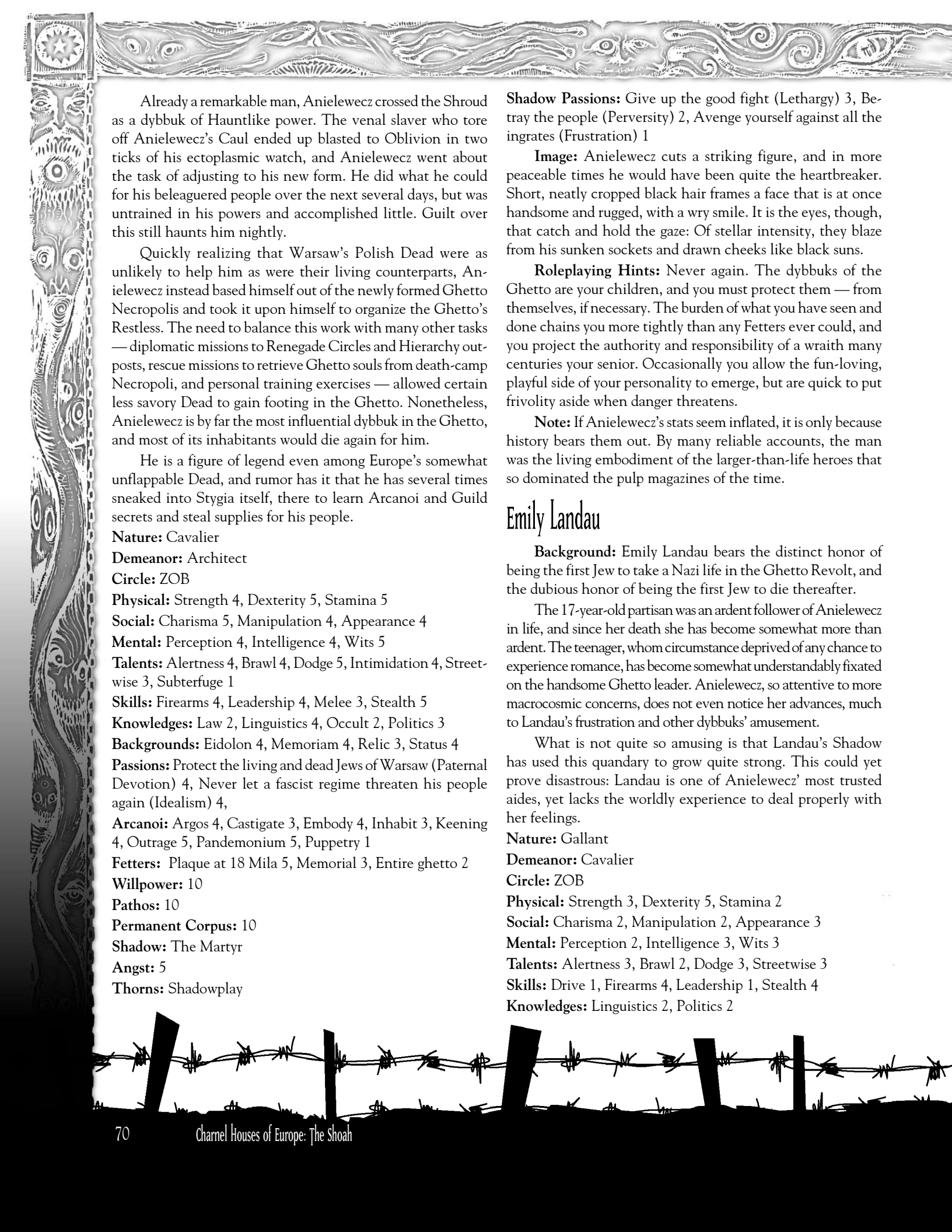
The Wild Ghetto is “ruled” by a bizarre dybbuk claiming to be the Restless incarnation of Anielewecz’s old ally Moishe the Bolshevik. The veracity of this claim has never been verified; what is known is that “Moishe” knows the Wild Ghetto far better than any of Anielewecz’s dybbuks, and has the support of a powerful Circle of Spooks and Haunters.

Mordechai Anielewecz

Background: In 1943, temporal and ethical responsibility for the fate of the ghetto fell on the 24-year-old shoulders of Mordechai Anielewecz. Already affiliated with the resistance group *Ha-Shomer Ha’Tzair*, on July 28, 1942 he formed the ZOB and begun the task of training his people for war. Early in 1943, however, he realized that there was no more time to prepare.

His fate has already been chronicled in the history section. When he finally went down to Nazi bullets in his command bunker at 18 Mila, however, he barely noticed; there was still so much work to do, and Anielewecz was not about to let a trifle like death stop him.





Already a remarkable man, Anielewecz crossed the Shroud as a dybbuk of Hauntlike power. The venal slaver who tore off Anielewecz's Caul ended up blasted to Oblivion in two ticks of his ectoplasmic watch, and Anielewecz went about the task of adjusting to his new form. He did what he could for his beleaguered people over the next several days, but was untrained in his powers and accomplished little. Guilt over this still haunts him nightly.

Quickly realizing that Warsaw's Polish Dead were as unlikely to help him as were their living counterparts, Anielewecz instead based himself out of the newly formed Ghetto Necropolis and took it upon himself to organize the Ghetto's Restless. The need to balance this work with many other tasks — diplomatic missions to Renegade Circles and Hierarchy outposts, rescue missions to retrieve Ghetto souls from death-camp Necropoli, and personal training exercises — allowed certain less savory Dead to gain footing in the Ghetto. Nonetheless, Anielewecz is by far the most influential dybbuk in the Ghetto, and most of its inhabitants would die again for him.

He is a figure of legend even among Europe's somewhat unflappable Dead, and rumor has it that he has several times sneaked into Stygia itself, there to learn Arcanoi and Guild secrets and steal supplies for his people.

Nature: Cavalier

Demeanor: Architect

Circle: ZOB

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Firearms 4, Leadership 4, Melee 3, Stealth 5

Knowledges: Law 2, Linguistics 4, Occult 2, Politics 3

Backgrounds: Eidolon 4, Memoriam 4, Relic 3, Status 4

Passions: Protect the living and dead Jews of Warsaw (Paternal Devotion) 4, Never let a fascist regime threaten his people again (Idealism) 4,

Arcanoi: Argos 4, Castigate 3, Embody 4, Inhabit 3, Keening 4, Outrage 5, Pandemonium 5, Puppetry 1

Fetters: Plaque at 18 Mila 5, Memorial 3, Entire ghetto 2

Willpower: 10

Pathos: 10

Permanent Corpus: 10

Shadow: The Martyr

Angst: 5

Thorns: Shadowplay

Shadow Passions: Give up the good fight (Lethargy) 3, Betray the people (Perversity) 2, Avenge yourself against all the ingrates (Frustration) 1

Image: Anielewecz cuts a striking figure, and in more peaceable times he would have been quite the heartbreaker. Short, neatly cropped black hair frames a face that is at once handsome and rugged, with a wry smile. It is the eyes, though, that catch and hold the gaze: Of stellar intensity, they blaze from his sunken sockets and drawn cheeks like black suns.

Roleplaying Hints: Never again. The dybbuks of the Ghetto are your children, and you must protect them — from themselves, if necessary. The burden of what you have seen and done chains you more tightly than any Fetters ever could, and you project the authority and responsibility of a wraith many centuries your senior. Occasionally you allow the fun-loving, playful side of your personality to emerge, but are quick to put frivolity aside when danger threatens.

Note: If Anielewecz's stats seem inflated, it is only because history bears them out. By many reliable accounts, the man was the living embodiment of the larger-than-life heroes that so dominated the pulp magazines of the time.

Emily Landau

Background: Emily Landau bears the distinct honor of being the first Jew to take a Nazi life in the Ghetto Revolt, and the dubious honor of being the first Jew to die thereafter.

The 17-year-old partisan was an ardent follower of Anielewecz in life, and since her death she has become somewhat more than ardent. The teenager, whom circumstance deprived of any chance to experience romance, has become somewhat understandably fixated on the handsome Ghetto leader. Anielewecz, so attentive to more macrocosmic concerns, does not even notice her advances, much to Landau's frustration and other dybbuks' amusement.

What is not quite so amusing is that Landau's Shadow has used this quandary to grow quite strong. This could yet prove disastrous: Landau is one of Anielewecz' most trusted aides, yet lacks the worldly experience to deal properly with her feelings.

Nature: Gallant

Demeanor: Cavalier

Circle: ZOB

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Streetwise 3

Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 4, Leadership 1, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Linguistics 2, Politics 2



Passions: Make Anielewecz fall in love with her (Love) 5, Avenge her death, (Vengeance) 3, Protect the surviving Jews of Warsaw (Pride) 2

Arcanoi: Argos 2, Embody 3, Outrage 3, Pandemonium 3

Fetters: Site of her death 4

Willpower: 8

Pathos: 6

Permanent Corpus: 10

Shadow: The Pusher

Angst: 6

Thorns: Freudian Slip

Shadow Passions: Make Mordechai care (Codependency) 5, "Avenge" yourself on anyone who pisses you off (Rage) 3

Image: Emily, once rather plain, has recently employed a Ghetto Masquer to "touch her up" in the vain hope that Anielewecz would notice. She is still rather thin, with distinctive, angular features rendered more striking by lack of food, but it is her eyes that are her most striking feature: jet-black and flashing with conviction.

Roleplaying Hints: Try to be all things to Mordechai; you combine the roles of devoted aide and eager puppy dog with something less than grace. Still, you are a skilled warrior and

a devout idealist. If there is anyone capable of resisting her Shadow unaided, it is you.

Adam Czerniakow

Background: Passersby who happen to glance toward the old *Judenrat* building at 26 Grzibowska often notice a tattered, shrouded figure walking silently, with forlorn tread and head held down. This is their former "leader," Adam Czerniakow, first *Obmann* of the Nazi-manipulated *Judenrat*.

Czerniakow tried through suicide to escape his twin damnations — the Nazis' hell and his personal hell — only to wind up chained there forever. He staggered aimlessly through the Ghetto for several years until Anielewecz, in pity, gave him a minor diplomatic role in the ZOB. It is for this pity and mercy that Czerniakow hates Anielewecz so.

Still, Czerniakow has held his tongue and handled his role with competence. In his liaisons with other groups of Restless Dead, Czerniakow has gained more influence than Anielewecz had perhaps intended. And unbeknownst to Anielewecz, or even Czerniakow's fragile Psyche, the former *Obmann*'s Shadow has opened diplomatic relations with Dead of a rather dubious stripe. Nightly Czerniakow's darker half waxes stronger. *If Warsaw's wraiths do not appreciate you, it whispers, then I know those who will accord you your proper place....*

Nature: Mediator

Demeanor: Follower



Circle: Warsaw Dybbuks
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2
Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Subterfuge 4
Skills: Etiquette 3
Knowledges: Linguistics 4, Politics 4, Science 3
Backgrounds: Haunt 3, Memoriam 2, Notoriety 1, Status 2
Passions: Redeem his "good name" (Pride) 3, Atone for the deaths of the deported ones (Guilt) 3, Keep the community safe (Selflessness) 2
Arcanoi: Fatalism 3, Keening 2, Lifeweb 3, Puppetry 4
Fetters: Judenrat building 5
Willpower: 4
Pathos: 7
Permanent Corpus: 9
Shadow: The Rationalist
Angst: 7
Thorns: Tainted Touch
Shadow Passions: Get Anielewecz killed (Envy) 5, Force Warsaw's wraiths to show gratitude for all that Czerniakow accomplished (Frustration) 4,

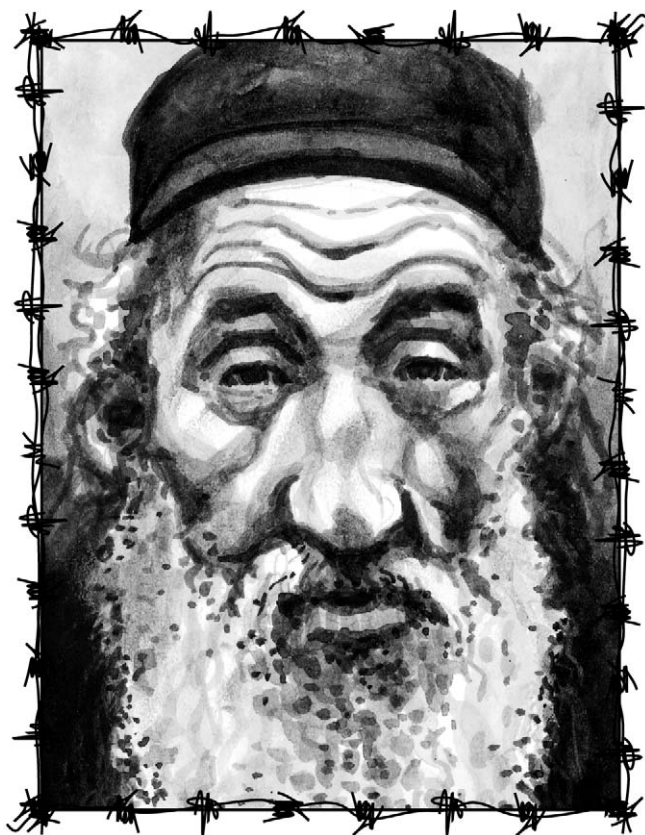
Image: Adam Czerniakow's lined, weary face bears a slightly goggle-eyed expression. This is less from surprise — nothing moves him anymore — than from the cyanide capsules with which he committed suicide.

Roleplaying Notes: You tried so hard, but still they hate you. What they don't understand is that there was nothing else you could have done. They whisper behind your back, calling you a spineless quisling, don't they? Well, if it hadn't been for you they would have all been shot during the first week of the occupation! Still, you suppose this whole ordeal is teaching you patience. One day very soon, everyone will get their just rewards, yes?

Rebbe Zishe Friedman

Background: Rebbe Friedman preaches in death what he did in life: nonviolence and nonaggression. As a living man in the Ghetto, he exhorted the young militants not to fight their Nazi oppressors, but to resist morally and by example. This burden was G-d's will, and only by suffering it with the stoicism characteristic of His chosen people would Warsaw's Jews be rewarded in His sight.

The young firebrands were not interested in the logic of the old, and called the Rebbe a "passive sheep." A certain SS



guard was even less impressed, and called Friedman many other names as he pistol-whipped him to death on Gesia Street.

Now Friedman leads Shabbat services and teaches a Heretic kabbalist cult. Many of Warsaw's impatient Dead, seeing no way out of this purgatory and increasingly disenchanted with the ZOB, have begun to turn to Friedman's more spiritual offerings. Friedman himself has made contact with several mysterious but obviously learned wraiths of an occult bent; one may only hope that in his studies he avoids the clutches of the Malfeans more readily than he did the talons of the SS.

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Caregiver

Circle: Talmudic Wraiths

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Awareness 3, Empathy 3, Expression 4

Skills: Etiquette 1, Meditation 3

Knowledges: Law (Talmudic) 3, Linguistics 4, Occult 4, Theology 4

Backgrounds: Artifact 3, Eidolon 1, Relic 1, Status 1

Passions: Preserve Judaic faith beyond the Shroud (Devotion) 5, Teach “truth” to all listeners (Fervor) 3, Abstain from militancy (Pacifism) 2

Arcanoi: Argos 1, Castigate 4, Fatalism 4, Moliat 1

Fetters: Tattered prayer book 3, Forgotten photograph 1

Willpower: 7

Pathos: 7

Permanent Corpus: 10

Shadow: The Martyr

Angst: 5

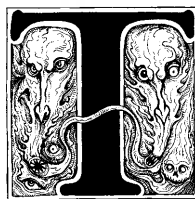
Thorns: Pact of Doom

Shadow Passions: Study occult lore regardless of the consequences (Curiosity) 4, Trick people into avenging Friedman’s death (Vengeance) 3,

Image: Friedman presents the classic image of a Talmudic scholar. His tall, gaunt frame is dressed in a severe black suit, and a long beard hangs well below his collar. His gaze is beatific and benevolent, and his expressive hands are usually clutched around a relic prayer book.

Roleplaying Hints: You admire young Anielewecz and are distressed that he does not reciprocate your feelings, but his way is not your way. This anger that the ZOB bears is an affront to G-d — no good, no final peace, will come of it.

Story Ideas

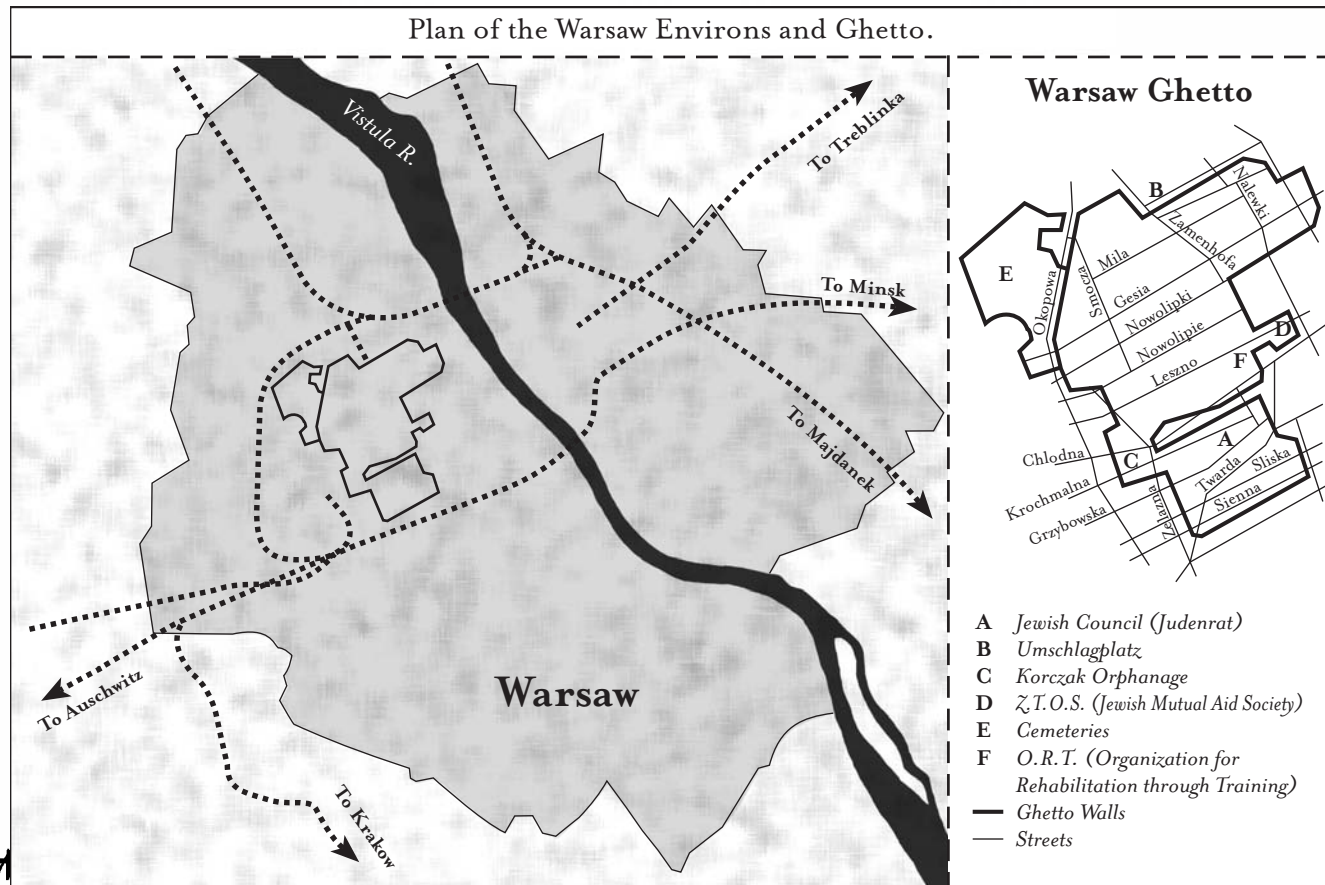


he Warsaw wraiths become involved in the politics of newly democratized Poland, thus violating the *Dictum Mortuum*. Tensions between the Hierarchy and the Warsaw Ghetto flare, and the characters arrive to patch things up...or exploit the situation for their own ends.

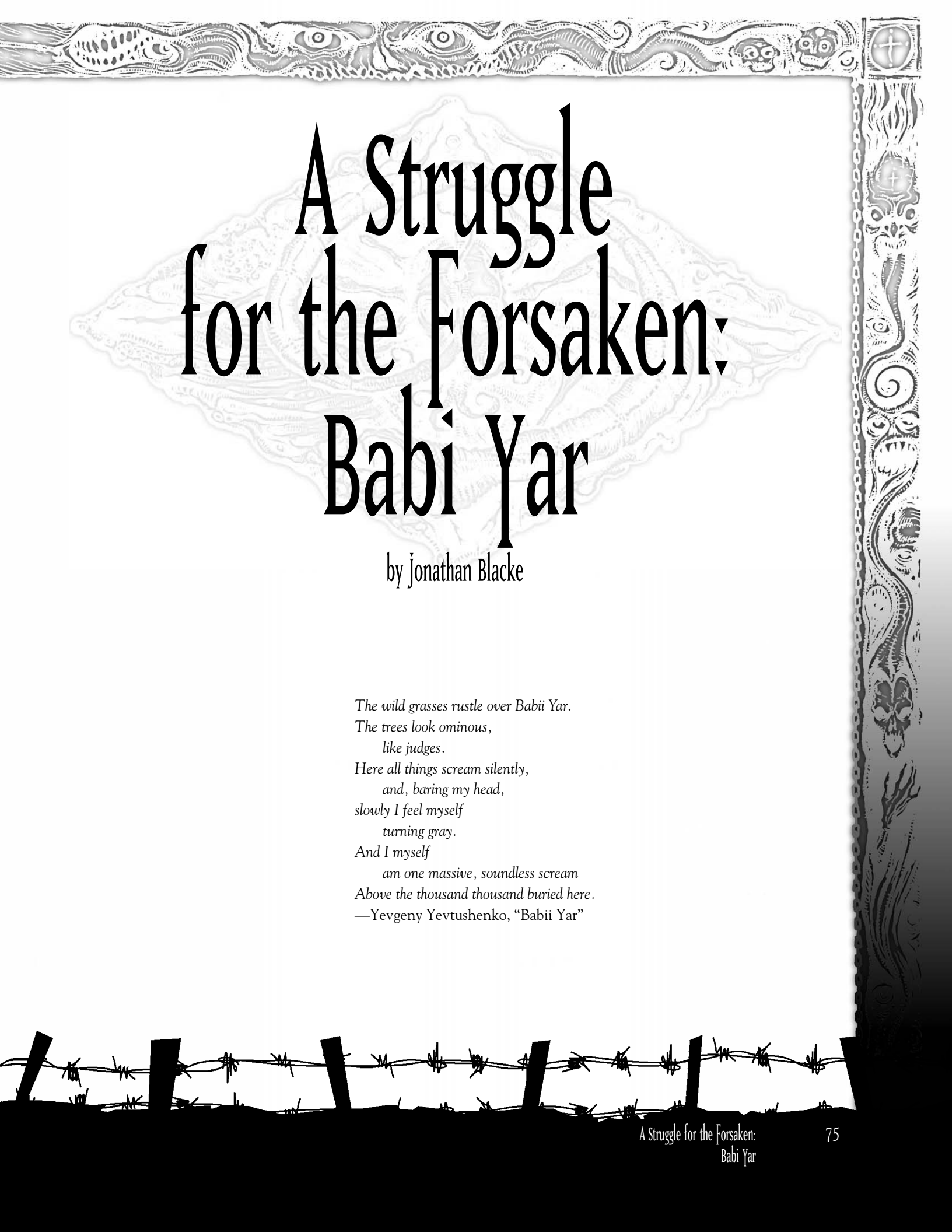
- Anielewecz makes a daring raid into the local Anacreon’s Citadel, absconding with a valuable Artifact. The characters are Legionnaires sent to go over the Wall and retrieve the Artifact. But was the thief actually Anielewecz — or a cunning Doppelganger? And if was the ZOB man who accomplished the feat, where do the characters’ sympathies lie?

- Rebbe Friedman (or his Shadow) contacts a Spectral hive, allowing the Shadow-eaten access into the Ghetto. The characters must “clean house,” thereby becoming involved in a harrowing game of cat and mouse amid the darkened streets of the Wild Ghetto.

Plan of the Warsaw Environs and Ghetto.







A Struggle for the Forsaken: Babi Yar

by Jonathan Blacke

*The wild grasses rustle over Babii Yar.
The trees look ominous,
like judges.
Here all things scream silently,
and, baring my head,
slowly I feel myself
turning gray.
And I myself
am one massive, soundless scream
Above the thousand thousand buried here.
—Yevgeny Yevtushenko, “Babii Yar”*



When Hitler made the decision to invade the

Soviet Union, he initiated something much darker than a simple first strike against the Red Army. As the Blitzkrieg rolled east along the Ukrainian steppes, in its wake followed the *Einsatzgruppen* — elite teams of SS soldiers under strict orders to

infiltrate towns and cities captured by the German divisions and liquidate the entire population of Jews in each one. These mobile death squads pierced through the villages of the western Ukraine region, slaughtering Jews, Gypsies and Communists in what was the beginning stage of the Holocaust, the actual calculated program of the liquidation of European Jewry that would fell close to six million Jews and millions of Gypsies, Poles, Communists, Roman Catholics and Russian POWs.

Babi Yar, a ravine near the city of Kiev in the Ukraine, was the site of one of the first mass murders of Jews. In September 1941, in the space of 36 hours, over 33,000 Jews were murdered by German soldiers and SS *Einsatzgruppen* commandos. For the next two years, Jews, Gypsies and Soviet prisoners were rounded up, transported to Babi Yar and executed — 100,000 in all, in one of the first and worst atrocities of the Second World War.

The Site and Its Surroundings

Babi Yar is situated in the northwestern

part of Kiev, a large dirt-sided ravine, not particularly noteworthy in its own right. Its middling-sized hills and slopes undulate matter-of-factly through the countryside. Sparse clumps of bushes and bracken intermittently break the roll of the landscape,

their bare, weather-beaten branches doggedly intertwining within each other in defiance of the unforgiving climate. The terrain itself is rocky and mostly infertile, its grayish-brown hue echoing the dull, industrial clouds over nearby Kiev. At one end of the Babi Yar ravine stands a small centuries-old Jewish cemetery, marking the end of Kiev's Melnik Street. Among the crypts and memorials, stand broken headstones or empty spaces where once grave markers stood. The missing stones have a story of their own to tell; they were appropriated by the execution squads for use as grindstones and weights in crushing the bones of their victims' bodies.

About a mile from the ravine stands a large monument commemorating the massacre. Erected by the Brezhnev govern-

ment in 1974, the 50-foot-high bronze sculpture features several entwined figures that seem to disappear into the monument's base. Several scenes are portrayed by the characters. A young girl weeps over the slain figure of her boyfriend. A Russian sailor shields his mother from attack with his own body. A young mother, her hands bound behind her with barbed wire, still suckles her child. A Red Army soldier and his partisan ally cast their steeled gazes of determination and patriotism at an unseen enemy. The sculpture is characteristic of hundreds that sprang up behind the Iron Curtain. Its cast trumpets the eternal struggle and resolve of the Soviet people, their die-cast Leninesque features implacable and rock-steady in the face of all enemies of the Motherland. An inscription at the base of the statue reads: "Here, in 1941-1943, the German Fascist invaders executed over 100,000 citizens of Kiev and prisoners of war." No mention is made of why the people who perished here were killed.

In the Shadowlands, the ravine still looks very much like it did on the day the killing started. The perimeter of the Haunt is encircled by a barbed wire fence, cordoning off the area in the Shadowlands just as the clearing at the ravine's edge was cordoned off that morning. The fence is a tangible manifestation for the wraiths who flock to this Haunt; it can fade away or solidify depending upon the area's collective Pathos and Angst. The terrain of the Haunt is dotted by small balefires. These mark the spots of huge pyres upon which the SS burned the entire morass of bodies during a mass exhumation, conducted in 1943 to wipe away any evidence of the massacres which had taken place.

The centerpiece of the Haunt is a giant pit, the mass grave where the bodies were buried. Along its bottom runs the unmistakable crack of a Nihil, the eerie humming of Oblivion resounding off its sleek chasmed walls. The clouds of smoke that billow up from the Nihil stink with the stench of blood and charred marrow, an assault of rot and decay that never seems to dissipate. The area around the pit is patrolled by a group of wraiths under the direction of Alexander Renko, a former captain in the Red Army. His troops keep a constant vigil over the abyss, ever ready to sound the alarm and defend the Haunt against any Spectres who climb up out of its depths.

History

Kiev fell to the Germans on September 19, 1941. On that day, a 50-man advance squad of *Einsatzgruppen* entered the city; two days later the chief of the operation arrived with the rest of the unit, 200 soldiers in all. They secured a working headquarters in Kreshchatik Street, as well as taking over Kiev's Continental Hotel and the city's doctors' club, which was converted into a meeting house for German officers.

Five days after taking Kiev, explosions rocked the center of the city. The Kreshchatik Street building was blown up, as well as other dwellings being used by the invaders. Detachments of Soviet NKVD security police, secretly stationed in the city, had been ordered to sabotage the German command. Many of the German forces, as well as inhabitants of the area, were killed. To address the attacks, on September 26th, German commanders held a meeting, at which they decided that in retaliation for the bombings, the Jews residing in Kiev were to be put to death. Carrying out the order would be the men of Sonderkommando 4a, an *Einsatzgruppen* battalion consisting of SD and SIPO security police, armed men of the Waffen SS, and reinforcements from local and regional Ukrainian police battalions.

On the morning of September 28th, the Jews of Kiev woke to find notices from the occupying force posted throughout the city: "All Jews living in the city of Kiev and its vicinity are to report by 8 o'clock on the morning of Monday, September 29th, 1941, at the corner of Melnikovsky and Dokhturov Streets. They are to take with them documents, money, valuables, as well as warm clothes, underwear, etc. Any Jew not carrying out this instruction and who is found elsewhere will be shot."

The next morning, thousands of Jews assembled at the intersection. Most of Kiev's population of 160,000 Jews had managed to flee the city before the Germans captured it; those

assembled were mostly the elderly, the sick, and mothers with their children. The young men had evacuated with the retreating Red Army. Rumors had been circulated, falsely started by the Germans, that the Jews of Kiev were to be transported out of the city and resettled elsewhere. The rumor, buoyed by the fact that the intersection designated for the roundup bordered on a railway station, seemed plausible to the crowds.

Ushered along by armed guards, the tightly packed masses of humanity moved along the streets of Kiev. Because of their sheer numbers, the thousands of Jews did not reach the end of Melnik Street until early afternoon. When they got to the Jewish cemetery at the end of the avenue, they found the road had been blocked with coils of barbed wire and antitank obstructions. A narrow passage had been left in the middle of the barricade, barely wide enough for two people abreast and guarded by SS and Ukrainian police.

The SS ordered the Jews through the passageway. When they reached the other side, the prisoners were ordered to hand over all their valuables and to strip naked. Those reluctant to do so had their garments ripped from their bodies, and the clothes and valises were placed in two huge piles off to the side. The naked victims were then forced to run through a gauntlet of SS men and Ukrainian police armed with clubs and truncheons and brass knuckles, who proceeded to beat them savagely through the human corridor. The broken and bleeding Jews were then marched over to the edge of the Babi





Yar ravine, standing in groups of ten on the ledge of a huge pit dug just the day before.


When the prisoners reached the edge of the pit, a squad of thirty men with automatic weapons gunned them down. The dead bodies fell off the ledge and slid down the pit's steep sides to the bottom. The shooters kept strafing each new group of ten in the same manner, holding their weapons at waist height to achieve the maximum number of kills — adults were shot in the stomach, older children in the chest, and the little ones in the head. A new squad of gunners was brought in every hour to relieve the previous one, while SS officers positioned themselves around the brim of the hole and watched for any signs of movement from those not within who had not yet died. These people they picked off with their sidearms.

The shooting continued until nightfall, when it became too dark to see. At this point, the SS had the ravine dynamited, covering both the dead and the few survivors in the pit with earth. Those Jews still waiting for execution were herded into abandoned garages and barns and kept under guard until the next morning, when the SS picked up from where they had

left off. At the end of the day on September 30, 1941, after 36 hours of wholesale slaughter, the Germans calculated that they had produced 33,771 dead Jews. The command squad of the German forces then left Kiev, leaving a few squads of soldiers behind.

Yet the carnage continued. *Einsatzgruppen* patrols continued to search the houses and shops of Kiev and the surrounding farms in the area, beating the bushes for any remaining Jews. Any who were found were herded into the ravine and machine-gunned to death by the remaining *Einsatzgruppen* men. For the next several months, many more thousands of Jewish men, women and children were seized, taken to Babi Yar, and gunned down. Many were given up by the local Ukrainian populations, who flooded local SS and SIPO offices with letters detailing the whereabouts of Jews.

For two years, the killings at Babi Yar went on; Gypsies and Soviet prisoners of war were brought to the site and executed as well. Over the 24 months that Babi Yar was in operation, approximately 100,000 persons lost their lives at the end of SS gun barrels.



In the summer of 1943, the German army was being beaten back by revitalized Russian forces, and the commanders who had originally initiated the massacres at Babi Yar were sent back to Kiev. They were under orders by the SS to erase any evidence of the carnage they had perpetrated. A special team of SS men brought in over three hundred inmates from the nearby concentration camp of Syretsk and utilized these prisoners in a mass exhumation of the thousands of bodies decaying in the covered-over pits. On August 18, 1943, bulldozers were brought in to open up the mass graves, and the prisoners were ordered to drag the corpses to large cremation fires, made from gasoline-soaked wooden logs from the nearby forests. There the bodies were incinerated to ash, and the ashes sifted by the Germans for any stray gold or silver. Tombstones were brought in from the nearby Jewish cemetery and used as giant pestles to grind down any bones that would not burn. The mass cremations ended on September 19th, on the second anniversary of the Germans' march into Kiev.

On September 29th, the anniversary of the first wave of mass bloodletting, the remaining prisoners (recent transportees, for the most part) learned that they were to be executed the following morning. That night, they planned a breakout from their temporary jail, an artificial cave cut into one side of the ravine. A few minutes after midnight, 25 prisoners broke out of their confines under cover of a fog that blanketed the area. Fifteen men escaped. The other 10 were shot during the escape or at dawn the following morning — the last victims to fall at the abattoir that was Babi Yar.

The Haunt

The 36-hour massacre of the Jews of Kiev on the last days of September 1941 produced an immediate change in the Shadowlands: the tearing open of a Nihil in the immediate vicinity. This released packs of Spectres, who were the first to get at these dormant spirits. The area was a shambles, as dozens of souls were almost instantly swept up by the marauding Spectres. Those souls not snatched by the horde were hardly able to adjust to their surroundings and the powers they now possessed before they were forced to defend themselves and the still-arriving masses. The fortuitous arrival of a group of Russian wraiths, formerly soldiers in the Red Army, added to their numbers, and a great number of wraiths were able to withstand the Spectral onslaught.

Many of the remaining wraiths split off in every direction, not caring to remain in the area lest they be attacked again by any straggling Spectres. Those who did stay guarded the passage of new souls as best they could, keeping watch over the hole to Oblivion for months upon end. They were bound to the site by

a driving force, a burning need to help the rest of the lost souls through the Shroud safely. When the killings at Babi Yar finally stopped, the Nihil became quiet, and even shrank. Another surge of Spectres came with the eruption of the bonfires, during the Nazis' attempt to sweep away their ghastliness, but Capt. Renko and his soldiers defeated this assault with relative ease. For a while, all seemed calm.


The arrival of officials from the Hierarchy at the Haunt was greeted with more suspicion than relief by the wraiths residing there. A few wraiths went with the legates to Stygia, but the majority stayed put around the Haunt. When their comrades returned and told them of the multitude of wraiths still out there, and of the signing of the Covenant of the Millions, the wraiths of Babi Yar convened and voted to join themselves formally into two Circles, to give some semblance of organization to their work. Babi Yar has become a gathering site for information about wraiths who fell victim to other *Einsatzgruppen* executions. Rail lines connect the Haunt to other parts of the Shadowlands, providing quick movement of people and data to other free Ghettos in Shadowlands Russia, Poland, and the Baltics. Unlike other free Ghettos, however, Babi Yar is no more than a way station for most of the wraiths who come here. It is simply too dangerous, considering the instability and nearness of the Nihil, to afford to give long-term shelter to traveling wraiths.

The Menders

The majority of the wraiths who remained at Babi Yar call themselves the Menders. They are the victims of Babi Yar, the souls of the Jews and others who cry out in the darkness for respect from the Quick and justice from the Dead. The Menders are also active in trying to bring back all the souls who scattered during the creation of the Haunt. The Menders consider it their place to poke through the Shroud to the Skinlands, and try to move the emotions of the living to remember and learn of the tragedy that occurred at Babi Yar. The wraiths of this Circle believe that they grow stronger with each wave of emotion that permeates the Shroud from the Skinlands, and they wait for the day when the living will truly mark the horrors that happened during the war, accord the victims the dignity they deserve. This, the Menders believe, will seal the Nihil up and bring some semblance of peace to this part of the Shadowlands.

The Fallen Comrades

The nucleus of the Fallen Comrades is a group of Russian Red Army soldiers from Kiev who returned to the remains of their homeland just after the creation of the Nihil and the flood



of souls from the Skinlands began. They have since considered it their duty to protect the population of the Haunt from the Spectres in the region, and to safeguard the Haunt from the rumblings deep within the Nihil. The Fallen Comrades have enlisted the help of other wraiths at Babi Yar and other sympathetic wraiths, who are willing to stand as sentinels. In addition to watching the Nihil, the Fallen Comrades often venture outside the Haunt, patrolling the Shadowlands of the Ukraine for the lost thousands who are tied to this place.

The Haunt Today

Officially a free Ghetto under the terms of the Covenant of the Millions, the area around Babi Yar is one of the least impressive of the sites thus demarcated. A rough wall, broken only by a gate at Melnik Street, divides the Necropolis of Kiev from the area controlled by the Covenant wraiths. There is some little traffic across the wall; Mender and Fallen Comrade wraiths travel into the city for trade or to tend their Fetters, visi-

tors come from Kiev's railway station out to the ravine and the occasional Hierarchy wraith still ventures outside the city to view the monument and the destruction it commemorates.

Babi Yar wraiths who travel into the city rarely do so alone. The ill will that brews on both sides of the wall has manifested itself violently many times over the years, and not every Mender or Fallen Comrade who has gone to see a Fetter in the city has returned.

At the ravine itself, small huts and barracks have been constructed from the relics of the logs used in the great burning. Here is where the Fallen Comrades and the Menders stay, and here is where they house the Haunt's steady population of transients. A great many records are housed at the Haunt as well, and there is a constant influx of wraiths seeking to peruse this information.

There are also a series of guard posts around the Nihil in the ravine itself. These are constantly manned, and by each one is an Artifact bell which is tolled at the first sign of Spectral activity.

The Massive Soundless Scream

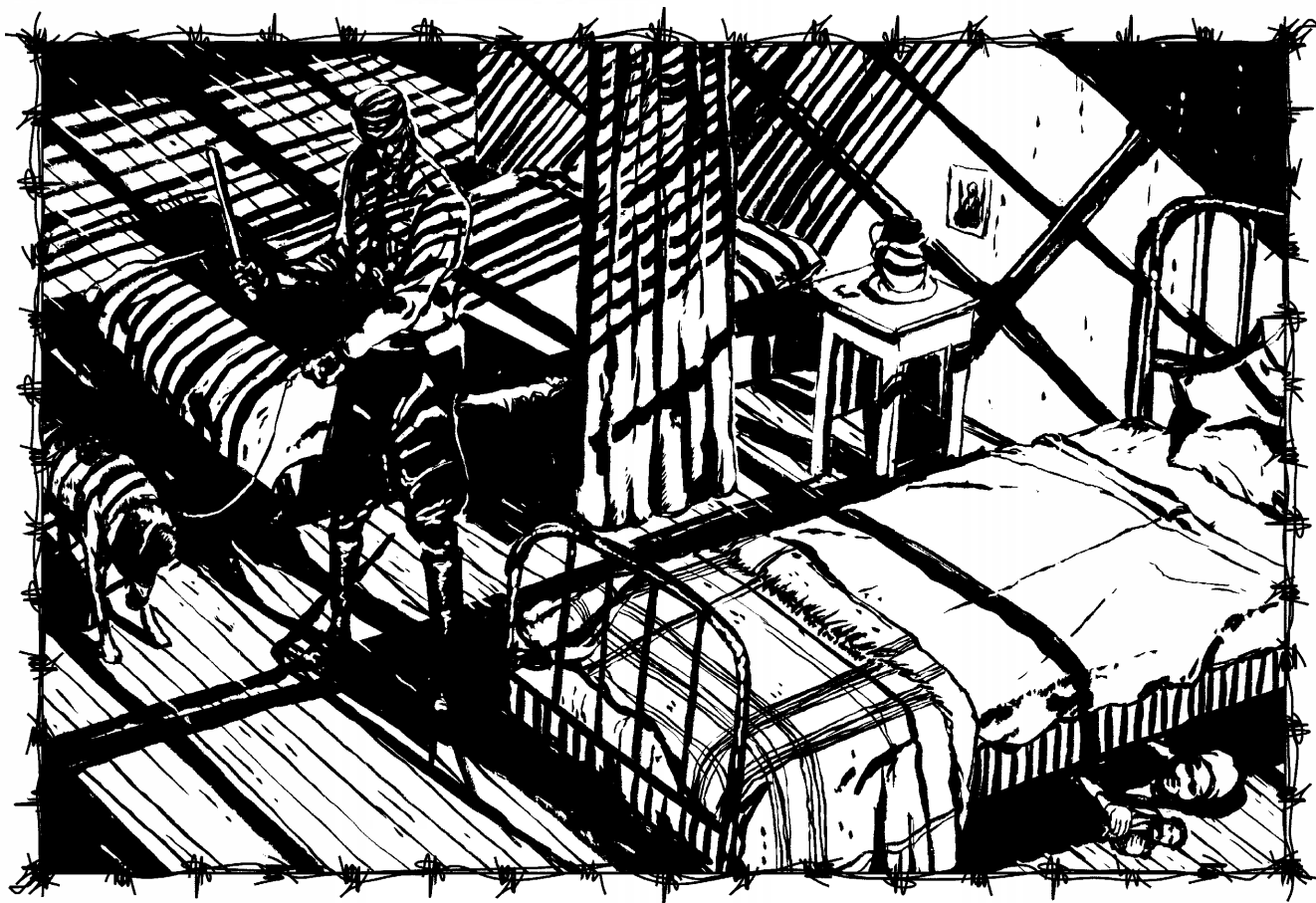
The half-century since the war's end has left the world with the awesome responsibility of coming to terms with the unspeakable deeds of the Holocaust. Some action by the Quick has strengthened many spots in the Shadowlands where the free Ghettos are located. These Ghettos, imbued with the Pathos that filters across the Shroud, have become more solidified, more real, more permanent fixtures upon the geography of the Land of the Dead.

But the free community at Babi Yar has not been as fortunate. The vast wave of Stalinist antisemitism that sprang up in Russia in the aftermath of the war meant that the killing fields of Babi Yar were to be officially forgotten, consigned to the black hole of denial and censorship. It was considered treasonous to say that the Russian people had been accomplices in the slaughter of Jews. The impact of the massacre was downplayed, as officials voiced platitudes about all of the Communists and Russians who perished at the site. The implications of *Einsatzgruppen* killings were rendered null and void. The repression of the Communist era has made the status Babi Yar a point of contention among the wraiths who reside there, the outsiders from Stygia, and the minions of Oblivion. The Circles present have waged a constant battle against forces from all sides, simply to mark off this barren patch of a dead existence as theirs, and theirs alone.

The unsavory aspects of this three-cornered battle has manifested itself in many ways, particularly in the direction

of Stygia. Kiev itself is a small Necropolis, and its ruling caste has always considered the wraiths of Babi Yar to be lepers and outlaws. This dislike crystallized in the wake of the Haunt's wraiths' actions toward those citizens of Kiev who handed over their neighbors and friends to the Nazis. Rumors abound in Kiev about the fate of former collaborators who fall afoul of the Circles at Babi Yar — that they are seized and immediately forged into inanimateness or hurled down into the mouth of the Nihil at the site.

The Menders and Fallen Comrades deny this, claiming that their purpose is to heal, not to hurt. There is a monolith of evidence, however, to contravene the Circles' denial. Standing on the outskirts of the haunt, in an area known to be occasionally frequented by Spectres, is a crudely made statue. It is a soulforged representation of the Skinlands monument at Babi Yar, the statue that ignores the murder of Jews. The soul-stuff that has been used to create the statue is that of German soldiers, Ukrainian police, and former collaborators. The monolith gives off a nearly unbearable amount of Angst, settling upon the senses like a humid fog of hatred and deafening one with its shriek of silent agony. It is a sponge for the wraiths' rage and frustrations, and many within the free Haunt and in the neighboring Necropolis fear what this statue might someday precipitate. In the meanwhile, it stands as a mute warning to those who have done the hovering souls of Babi Yar wrong.



Aftermath

In recent years, the fall of Communism and the breakup of the Soviet Union allowed the peoples formerly hidden behind the Iron Curtain to begin the process of rewriting their histories free from the censorship of party overseers. In the fall of 1991, Ukrainian officials decided to hold a series of commemorative festivals to remember the tragedies perpetrated on their soil. Kiev played host to an international scholarly conference and set aside a week of remembrance to honor those thousands of lives snuffed out in the fires of Babi Yar.

Many former residents of Kiev returned to the city; memorial exhibits lined the streets; commemorative pins and medallions were struck. The genesis of reflection upon the evil that happened at Babi Yar was underway, but it fell short of total acknowledgment. The subject of those who collaborated with the *Einsatzgruppen*, who deliberately gave their neighbors, fellow workers and friends up to SS death squads was danced around during the week of remembrance.

The tension regarding the legacy of Babi Yar still exists in the Ukraine. Although Holocaust researchers are trying to

make progress in their understanding and acceptance of the facts, the subconscious reluctance of many to admit openly that they are a part of this fatal legacy, that their actions were instrumental in the tally of dead, is still strong. It is a silent, yet powerful force in the progress of truth (or lack thereof). Although the wraiths of Babi Yar's burden is slightly eased by the absence of draconian opposition to the truth, the remaining passive opposition is still a potent force.

Diana Ryachev

Diana Ryachev was Jewish, but married a Russian, a doctor from Kiev, and taken his Ukrainian surname. She had a good home, a loving husband, and a fun little sideline as an actress in the local amateur theater, playing modest parts in comedies and musicals. When the war came and the German army pushed into Russia, Diana's husband did his patriotic duty and was shipped off to the eastern front as a medic. Diana moved in with her parents, who lived on a predominantly Jewish street. After the Germans marched in and the trouble started with local resisters, Diana worried for her parents, but little for herself. After all, she was Russian now.

Diana read the fateful notice that required all the Jews to assemble on September 29th and hardly slept that entire week. She and her parents discussed the matter, and they all agreed that Diana would escort her parents to the square that morning, and then remain in Kiev. Flight was impossible at this point, anyway.

The morning of the 29th, the streets were filled with the entire Jewish population of the city, half awake and hurrying to the departure place. Diana Ryachev and her parents were in the midst of a sea of people, trucks and carts as relatives and neighbors saw each other off and wished their Jewish acquaintances well. As the crowds moved closer to the meeting place, however, the vaguely hopeful atmosphere began to turn sour. Diana heard the murmurs of those around her, worrying and confused, and began to worry herself. She finally got close enough to see what was going on, and her eyes filled with terror. From a distance she could see the beginning of the day's horrors. Soldiers were ordering the assembled people to take off all of their clothing, and stripping those who resisted. Suddenly, a German soldier walked up to Diana. He yanked off her fur coat, a gift from her husband, and took it away.

Diana turned around and pushed back through the throng of people to where her parents stood. They too had seen what was happening, and told her to go back. Tears welling up in her eyes, Diana made her way back to one of the guards, protesting that she had been caught up in the crowd somehow, and that she wasn't meant to be here. The soldier asked for Diana's identity card, and upon reading it, screamed at her to get her dirty Jewish hide back in line. Diana dropped her card and at last understood what was happening to the thousands of people around her — they were being executed.

Diana had lost her parents by then, but was determined to get out. She marched up to one of the soldiers and demanded to see an officer in charge, repeating her story about getting caught in the throngs. He asked for her card. She rummaged in her purse, and the soldier snatched it from her to rifle through its contents himself. He did not find the identity card, but did come across a union card that simply gave her name, Diana Ryachev. *With that kind of good Russian last name*, the soldier thought, *she was obviously telling the truth.*

Diana Ryachev was escorted to a small hill where a number of other people were sitting and told to wait. She sat there all day, watching the same nightmare repeat itself over and over again: people running through the gauntlet, stripped naked, marched out of sight behind another hill. And shot.

And shot.

And shot.

By nightfall, Diana could no longer hear the shooting and the screaming and the dying. She could barely hear or see anything.



Eventually one of the officers in charge walked over to the hill where Diana was and demanded to know from the guard who these people were. When the guard said that they were Ukrainians who were here by mistake and ought to be let go, the officer barked at the soldier to shoot the lot of them. No witnesses were to remain alive.

The guard ordered Diana and the others up and marched them around the hill. They were not ordered to strip, but led to the killing site in their clothes. Diana and the others with her, about 30 people, were marched over to the edge of a sand quarry. Her head swam with adrenaline and the blood pounded in her skull as she forced herself to look down into the pit.

It was a sea of bodies — men, women and children, naked, broken, and drenched in blood. Some of the people were not yet completely dead, and Diana could see the hellish motions in the pit of half-dead human beings. Living souls buried under dozens of corpses wailed and screamed as they tried to claw their dying selves up to the surface. Diana could not move, could not sense anything but the nightmare before her. A part of her told her to look for her parents, but she knew she would never find them. Diana Ryachev simply stood at the edge of the pit, transfixed by the hell before her. She barely felt the bullets that entered her chest and exploded her heart.

Diana Ryachev entered the Shadowlands so consumed with guilt and fear that she was barely coherent. Her Caul was taken from her at Babi Yar by a sympathetic wraith named Alexander, a Russian soldier who had died on the front lines. Somehow, she managed to communicate with him what had happened there that day, and Renko led the counterassault that secured Babi Yar.

After the Covenant was signed, the area around the ravine was made independent from the Kiev Necropolis, and a wall built between the two. As she had been killed for her connection with Judaism, Diana remained on the outside of the city and joined the Menders. She continues to search the Shadowlands for information about her parents, simply to tell them how sorry she is.

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Judge

Circle: The Menders

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Streetwise 2

Skills: Disguise (from her theater work) 1, Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Singing 3, Performance 2

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 4, Lore 3, Theater 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 1, Memoriam 1, Status 3

Passions: Find and reconcile with parents (Love) 5, Search for information on her missing husband (Love) 4, Show gratitude to Alexander (Loyalty) 3

Arcanoi: Embody 2, Fatalism 2, Keening 2, Outrage 1

Fetters: Babi Yar 5, The theater in Kiev 3

Willpower: 8

Pathos: 7

Permanent Corpus: 8

Shadow: The Martyr

Angst: 6

Thorns: Death's Sigil, Pact of Doom

Shadow Passions: Convince Diana that her parents will never forgive her (Fear) 4, Double-cross Alexander so that he will be swallowed by Oblivion (Envy) 3


Image: Diana Ryachev appears to be 29 years old, with short auburn hair and a gentle face. Her eyes, though, have no color to them. They are simply two large black pupils eternally trapped in her final, hypnotic gaze into the valley of death. Her clothes, simple but elegant, are torn in several places from the beatings she received on her last morning. Although she seems detached, Diana Ryachev is very aware and lucid. Determined to find the rest of her family, she simply doesn't bother with most of the social niceties anymore.

Roleplaying Notes: You are set upon learning everything you can about the Shadowlands in order to reunite yourself with your parents. Consequently, you devour any piece of information that you come across — ignorance and lies are what brought you here, and you are not about to be fooled again. The Menders are appreciative of your knowledge and insight, but sometimes you feel that they are going too slowly for your personal taste.

Nikolai Dimitrius

Not everyone follows orders. Nikolai Dimitrius was a policeman in Kiev, a simple constable who patrolled many of the streets in the few largely Jewish neighborhoods. And as with most young patrolmen, Nikolai knew many of the families and shopowners in his area well. He didn't really have any opinion on Jews one way or the other, but was always courteous and professional toward them. A lot of his fellow policemen and sergeants, however, had very strong opinions about the Jews, none of them good. Nikolai heard a lot of talk in headquarters and in bars about the dirty sneaking Jewish this and the dirty sneaking Jewish that, and after a while some of this hate began to rub off on him. He became cooler toward the people on his neighborhood beat. Reports of burglaries and vandalism somehow disappeared from his notebook. Soon the antisemitism of his policeman friends seeped into Nikolai Dimitrius, and poisoned his thoughts. When the Germans took the city, their commanding officers co-opted the police force to serve as auxiliary guards and patrols, including Nikolai Dimitrius.





The day it all happened, Nikolai Dimitrius was stationed in the quieter sections of Kiev, making searches of abandoned apartments for any leftover Jews. He was walking down one of the streets when a truck pulled up and the German driver told him to get in, that he was needed at the assembly site. When Nikolai arrived, he was led to a group of women and children sitting off to the side. They were stark naked, and had been badly beaten. He was ordered to stand guard.

Nikolai looked at the SS man as if he were speaking in tongues. He looked around him and saw thousands of people, all of them Jews, being beaten and kicked and stripped naked. He could hear people screaming and crying, and the steady rat-at-at of automatic weapons. Nikolai demanded to know what they were doing to the Jews. "We're getting rid of them, you stupid bastard," was the response. The SS man pulled out his pistol and told Nikolai to stand guard or he'd get a bullet right in his head. Insensate with fear and horror, Nikolai went over to the prisoners and marched up and down, up and down, not daring to look into their eyes. *This isn't happening. This can't be happening. I never wanted this to happen.*

Nikolai couldn't take any more. While the Germans weren't looking, he slipped away and made off down the streets of Kiev. Turning a corner, he saw two young girls, no older than fourteen, begging mercy from an SS guard. They told him they were from the orphanage in town, that they had been brought there as infants. They had no idea what nationality they were. Nikolai watched the two fragile innocents crouched on all fours, kissing the soldier's gleaming boots, wrapping their little frames in each other's arms, begging this towering foreigner to allow them to live. He stepped back, took out his pistol, and shot both of them in the head.

Nikolai Dimitrius was paralyzed as the soldier holstered his weapon and strolled away, leaving the two dead children lying in the street, still embracing each other. Their commingling blood rushed out of them and stained the cobblestone. He watched for a long while, focusing on the two lifeless little girls, and was only jarred out of his trance by something tugging at his sleeve. It was a young man, about his age. "Come on, we found another one," the interloper said.

The man led Nikolai to the kitchen of a farmhouse, where two women sat, an old Russian woman with a pinched face who exuded both bitterness and triumph, and a young woman of about twenty, scared and shaking. They had found a Jew, the old woman said, and wanted Nikolai to take her away. He looked at the man and the old crone, and walked over to the shaking young woman. He took her by the arm and pulled her out the door of the house, dragging her kicking and clawing and screaming to the nearest side street. It was empty, but he could feel the burning hatred of the old woman's eyes on his back.

Nikolai pulled his prisoner down a few blocks, then shoved her into an empty house. He told her to watch carefully for any soldiers, and when she got the chance, to run. Then, turning his back on her forever, Nikolai Dimitrius left the house and down the street into another deserted alley. There, he took out his revolver and shot himself.

Nikolai Dimitrius returned to Babi Yar to end his nightmares. He knows that he cannot repair the damage he did, but he has joined the Fallen Comrades, willing to help fight against the Spectres that boil up from this part of the Tempest. Nikolai has proven himself to be an able fighter, but his dedication and fastidiousness can sometimes be a bit much even for the Comrades.

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Fanatic

Circle: The Fallen Comrades

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Interrogation 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 2, Lockpicking 1, Melee 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 1, Investigation 2, Law 2

Backgrounds: Artifact 1, Eidolon 1, Mentor 2, Status 1

Passions: Protect the Haunt and the wraiths (Duty) 5, Win the confidence of the other Fallen Comrades (Desire for Respect) 4

Arcanoi: Argos 2, Castigate 3, Lifeweb 2, Mnemosynis 1

Fetters: The streets in Kiev where he walked his beat 5, The alley where he blew his brains out 4, The station-house 2

Willpower: 8

Pathos: 7

Permanent Corpus: 9

Shadow: The Sophomore

Angst: 7

Thorns: Aura of Corruption, Shadow Call, Tainted Touch

Shadow Passions: Sabotage the Fallen Comrades (Treachery) 4, Release Spectres from the Nihil (Rage) 3, Find the spirit of the young woman Dimitrius saved and throw her to Oblivion (Sadism) 3

Image: Nikolai Dimitrius is in his early 20s, with closely cropped black hair and some vestigial evidence of baby fat in his young face. He wears a policeman's uniform and cap, and carries with him a very special Artifact, the armband he wore as a member of the auxiliaries. It is a memory of the evil he did that day — and the one instance of good. It is this memory that strengthens him and pushes him forward.

Roleplaying Notes: You have attempted to sublimate all of your nightmares into your duties with the Comrades, and as a result are very regimented and disciplined in your behavior. However, deep down inside you are hounded by the horrors of that day, by the scene of the two dead orphans and the cold hatred of the old woman. You hold on to the one instance of good you did that day, saving that young woman, and often wonder what became of her. Perhaps some day she will one day end up here. Volunteer for practically any assignment; show the other wraiths that you can be trusted, that you were once a symbol of right and justice, and can be so again.

Captain Alexander Renko

Alexander Renko was born and grew up in Kiev. His father and uncles had fought in Moscow with Lenin on Red October, and as a boy Alexander loved to hear the men telling stories about the fight for freedom against the Tsar. The old revolutionaries would get choked up with emotion over honor and patriotism and the thrill of a righteous fight, and Alexander always wished that one day he would be able to fight for his beloved Mother Russia.

When he was old enough, Alexander Renko enlisted in the Red Army. He was a bright young man and rose through the ranks quickly, eventually being promoted to captain. He was put in charge of a platoon of young soldiers, all from his hometown of Kiev. Many of them had grown up together, and arguing about the folks back home and whose family was doing what and whose sister was the prettiest were frequent occurrences in Renko's platoon. The soldiers' friendship and loyalty blurred the levels of rank and made them a real family, far more than the sum of their parts. When they were shipped to the front, the men of Renko's platoon talked of medals and packages from home, certain that they would return one day as heroes. None thought they could be killed.

Many of them died at the front, including Captain Renko. Still, love and loyalty bound the Captain to his men. Rather than leave immediately, Renko set out in search of his fallen men. One by one, he located a small group of the boys from Kiev, each wandering through the hellish Underworld in search of understanding and companionship. Still full of piss and vodka, the remnants of the old Red Army platoon reassembled and began to make their way through the Shadowlands, back to the hometown they loved more than life. However, the Nazis advanced more quickly than the ghosts of Renko's platoon walked, and the German army rolled into Kiev well before Alexander Renko's little command did.

When Renko and his men finally came to the place of their birth, they beheld a churning, fiery abomination. The atmo-



sphere was thick with pain and death, filled with the endless wailing of 30,000 souls. The ghosts of old people and children lamented and writhed in infernal hysteria. Even as they gaped at the horror, Captain Renko and his men were assaulted by a pack of whirling Spectres, and barely forced them back into the pit they had sprung from, a gigantic, seething hole at the base of the old Babi Yar ravine.

Looking at the chaos before him, Renko came upon the figure of a young woman who had just entered the Shadowlands. She lay motionless on the cold ground and was still covered in her amniotic Caul. He removed it from her, and the freed woman began shrieking and screaming, telling Renko the most horrible things — they were killing everyone, she said, right there in the pit, *look at them, for God's sake*. Alexander Renko turned to where the woman was gesturing and found that he could actually see through into the real world. What he saw chilled him. The Germans had taken Kiev, and were murdering its Jewish citizens, all of them, thousands and thousands of them in an instant. Renko could see it all like some horrible cinema: the beatings, the executions, and the arrival of dozens of souls at a time. He could also see Spectres and twisted monstrosities in the pit, rending open the wraiths' Cauls and trying to devour as many as they could. Instinctively, Renko



marshaled his squad and started a counterattack against the Spectres, keeping up the assault for hours until they had driven the creatures from the pit.

With the battle ended, Alexander Renko could still see into the Skinlands. He saw the smoky outlines of soldiers chasing people through the streets, the Kiev police rounding up Jews, the citizens of his home willfully handing their neighbors over to the murderers. He was utterly furious at his townspeople and utterly frustrated at what he could see and hear and do nothing to stop. At that moment, Renko called his men together and banded them together to form the Circle of the Fallen Comrades. They pledged themselves to guard the souls who would die in this massacre from the demons who sought to kill them again. Captain Alexander Renko is the leader of the Fallen Comrades. He and his men are the main defenders of the Haunt at Babi Yar, the watchers over the activities on the far side of the Shroud and the Nihil that exists at the bottom of the dark pit.

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Director

Circle: The Fallen Comrades

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Scan 3, Search 3

Skills: Blind Fighting 2, Camouflage 3, Climbing 1, Firearms 3, Heavy Weapons 2, Melee 3, Tracking 3

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 3, Bureaucracy 2, Military Science 3, Poisons 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Eidolon 3, Notoriety 3

Passions: Guard the Haunt against Spectres (Duty) 5, Reunite the members of his squadron (Fraternal Devotion) 4, Protect and help Diana Ryachev (Love) 3

Arcanoi: Castigate 5, Embody 4, Fatalism 3, Flux 2, Outrage 1

Fetters: The battlefield where he was killed 5, The house in Kiev where he grew up 4

Willpower: 10

Pathos: 9

Permanent Corpus: 9

Shadow: The Perfectionist

Angst: 7

Thorns: Bad Luck, Dark Allies, Trick of the Light

Shadow Passions: Sacrifice all the Fallen Comrades to Oblivion (Envy) 4, Destroy the Haunt and thereby erase the shame of what the people of Kiev did (Rage) 3

Image: Alexander Renko is 26, but the war and the fight in the Shadowlands make him look about a million years old. He wears the traditional olive-drab coat with red epaulets denoting an officer of the Red Army, and carries both a sidearm and a short automatic weapon slung over his shoulder. Renko is a caring man, but stern with those under his command. His responsibility is too great for it to be otherwise

Roleplaying Notes: You believe that fate brought you and the Fallen Comrades back to this place, not only to keep the Spectres at bay, but to atone in some manner for the cowardice and cruelty exhibited by your townsfolk. That statue in the distance, you secretly think, is justice served to the murderers who destroyed your town and its people.

You are protective of your brothers in arms, but especially of Diana, and are always on the alert for some scrap of information about her parents. Remain professional and alert; You are the first and last line of defense, and know well that Oblivion never goes on furlough. You are often seen standing solo watch over the pit and the Nihil, willing to sacrifice yourself if need be for the safety of the Haunt.

Marta Karinska

Marta Karinska grew up poor and remained so all her life. She lived on a small farm in the outlying regions of Kiev with her husband, an abusive boor who drank himself to death in their 16th year of marriage. This left Marta and her nine-year-old son to eke out some sort of living on a patch of neglected acreage that produced negligible harvests. She and the boy had little produce left over for sale after filling their own needs, and they were rarely able to get any sort of good price for her crops in the local Jewish markets in town. Marta Karinska cursed her husband for wasting his life and theirs, and she cursed the Jewish shopowners who refused to offer worthwhile prices to her. It wasn't her fault that the harvest was bad, so why should she suffer?

For years, Marta and her son Ivan tilled the rough land, trying to keep from losing everything, and still the cheap Jews in the city would not give her decent money for her crops. *They care only about their fat wallets*, Marta said. *They're the ones who are killing us*, she told her son. *What right do they have to take the bread out of our mouths? Since when did their precious gold become more important than us good Ukrainians?*

Marta was in the city the day the notice of deportation was posted, and couldn't be happier. They were finally moving the Jews out, she told herself. Now, maybe, she could make ends meet a little easier. The next morning she sent her son into town to run some errands while the mass exodus of Jews was underway. Ivan came running back to the farmhouse nearly out of breath. They weren't sending the Jews away, he told



Marta. They were just killing them all, at the ravine at the end of Melnik Street. Marta couldn't believe the news — and she couldn't believe her luck. *The Germans were really taking care of things in Kiev*, she thought.

As she pondered this, Marta heard a noise coming from the shed in back of the farmhouse. She and Ivan went out back and found a young woman, a little younger than Ivan, trying to hide there. Marta demanded to know where she had come from. She said that she had been on her way back to Kiev from digging trenches a long way away, and had spent the night in the shed. Marta was not convinced. *The trespasser was a Jew*, she decided, *and she deserved no better than the rest of them*. Marta grabbed the young woman and marched her into the kitchen and sent Ivan off to find the nearest policeman. Ivan came back quickly, having found an auxiliary right away.

Marta told the policeman that they had caught a Jew hiding out in their shed, and asked him to take the Jew away and shoot her. The policeman looked at the trembling young woman, and at Marta Karinska. Marta saw something in the young soldier's look, something that bespoke fright and disgust at her and her son. This was not what she had expected. She grew indignant, snapping at the policeman to get the Jewish scum out of her house. He looked at Marta again, then took

the young woman by the arm and dragged her outside, taking her down the main road toward Kiev. And even as she saw him pulling the Jew along, Marta Karinska knew that he wasn't going to do anything with her.

Marta Karinska died after the war, a horrid and bitter woman full of spite and anger at the world. When she reached the Shadowlands, her hatred for the Jews and anger at the coward policeman pulled her quickly to Oblivion. Floundering in the Tempest only a few short years after her death, she became a Nephwrack. Denied what she thought was justice in life, Marta is determined to wreak havoc upon the assembled communities at Babi Yar. Half a century later, she is still unable to let go of the hate she was so consumed with in life.

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Conniver

Caste: Nephwrack

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Crafts 1, Melee 1, Performance 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 2, Occult 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Eidolon 2, Notoriety 1

Dark Passions: Destroy the stinking Jews (Fanaticism) 5, Use the negativity in the atmosphere to tear open a new Nihil (Destruction) 3, Lead as many wraiths into Oblivion as you can (Rage) 3, Corrupt Nikolai Dimitrius and make him finish the job he failed at (Hate) 3

Arcanoi: Contaminate 3, Hive-Mind 2, Tempest-Weaving 3

Fetters: None

Being (Fanaticism): 8

Permanent Corpus: 6

Angst: 7

Psyche: The Confessor

Psyche Passions: Help Marta realize that the Jewish wraiths are not the real target of her hatred (Hope) 5, Reunite Marta with her son Ivan and use the bonds of family to achieve her Redemption (Love) 4

Fronds: Guilt, Mirror

Image: Marta is a woman of late middle age, strong from working the land. Her face is ratlike and fanged, the product of Oblivion's effects and years of living in a shell of hate and spite and loneliness. She is often seen skulking around the soulforged statue at Babi Yar, feeding off the negativity directed toward what the sculpture represents.

Roleplaying Notes: The Jews are still around, and they're playing those soldiers for patsies. Even better, that little runt of a policeman is with them. How fortunate. All the links are now in one chain, and all you have to do is find the weakest one. You can do it. You've got time on your side, and you can feel the power of their rage coursing through you, swelling up, invigorating you and the others of your caste, ready to burst through the Nihil and destroy everything in sight...not yet, though. Not yet. Let them settle themselves, let the Jews think that they're finally in control. *Then* you will strike.

Melki Sornokov

Melchizedek Sornokov, known to everyone as Melki, was a tailor from Chernigov, a town to the north of Kiev. He was arrested by an advancing German squad and transported to a concentration camp near Kiev called Syretsk. There, Melki was given a hard labor detail. He had been in the camp for almost a year when the commandant put Melki in a select group of over three hundred men and handed them over to a visiting group of SS soldiers.

The prisoners were herded into the backs of trucks and driven out of the camp. They arrived a short while later in a clearing on the outskirts of Kiev, where the SS had brought in bulldozers and other large clearing equipment. As Sornokov watched, the machines rumbled forward and took the top layer of soil from a large section of terrain. The digging had exposed a giant hole filled with hundreds of bodies, most of them in

advanced stages of rot and decomposition. Other bulldozers were doing the same thing all over the ravine, unearthing several mass graves.

Along with two dozen other men, Melki Sornokov was ordered to climb down into the pits and bring up the remains of all the dead. The prisoners were to drag the piles of rotting, infested flesh over to several huge bonfires that were burning nearby, and do so until all of the pits had been emptied and all of the corpses had been reduced to ash.

Sornokov and the rest of the prisoners exhumed the contents of the graves in their entirety. For nearly six weeks, Melki Sornokov dug up thousands of human beings, thousands of his people. He saw each face, swollen and slimy with decay. He saw each blackened joint, the grin of each skull. Breathing nothing but the repulsive odor of death, he carried hundreds of bodies out of the ground, maggots covering his limbs and the smoke from the pyres stinging his eyes. Each night the men were marched into a small cave cut out of the ravine and locked inside, and left alone with their nightmares. Nobody spoke of the day's work, or of the morrow. Melki and the rest of the men who worked the same pit knew exactly what they were doing: destroying the evidence of Nazi barbarism.

The pits were finally cleared in late September. On the 29th, the men were told that they would be shot in the morning, to silence any witnesses. Melki and the others in his work crew decided that they had to escape. Someone had to live to tell the world about what had happened here. That night, Melki Sornokov and his fellow workers smashed open the lock on the cave opening and took off across the ravine. It was a foggy night, and the sounds of German exclamatives and gunshots came from every direction. Melki Sornokov was hit in the knee by a stray bullet and fell to the earth, unable to go any further. The next morning, he and a few others who had attempted escape were shot by a firing squad.

Once in the Shadowlands, Melki Sornokov had to see what had become of the place where he had been forced to erase the truth. The sight of Babi Yar and its dark hills and fires did not surprise him. Here was the evidence he had labored so hard to destroy, and a part of him was glad that somewhere it remained. Eager to restore the memories he had been forced to erase, Melki soon aligned himself with the Menders. Now he works to ease the destruction in the Shadowlands while attempting to restore the memory of the truth in the minds of the Quick.


Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Conformist

Circle: The Menders

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4





Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Awareness 2, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Guile 2
Skills: Crafts 4, Etiquette 2, Meditation 2, Repair 2
Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Genealogy 1, Linguistics 2, Theology 2
Backgrounds: Contacts 1, Eidolon 2, Memoriam 2, Status 1, Wealth 2
Passions: Assist the Menders in keeping the memories of Babi Yar alive (Duty) 4, Find forgiveness from the wraiths for what he was forced to do (Desire for Acceptance) 3
Arcanoi: Argos 2, Embody 2, Flux 1, Keening 1, Puppetry 1, Usury 2
Fetters: Babi Yar 4, The camp at Syretsk 4, His old tailor shop 2
Willpower: 8
Pathos: 8
Permanent Corpus: 7
Shadow: The Paranoid
Angst: 6
Thorns: Aura of Corruption, Infamy, Freudian Slip
Shadow Passions: Convince Sornokov that the entire Circle resents him for his part in the massacre (Fear) 4, Take advantage of Sornokov's discomfort and lure him into Oblivion (Confusion) 3

Image: Melki Sornokov is in his early fifties, slightly shorter than average and mostly bald. He is dressed in the striped tunic and pants of a prisoner, with broken shackles around his legs. Although Melki is relatively strong, his Corpus is bony and emaciated. His visage reflects the palpable thinness of undernourishment so prevalent in a concentration camp.

Roleplaying Notes: What you saw of Babi Yar in the Shadowlands you considered almost fitting symbolism at first, but you have since learned that nothing in this world of the dead is symbolic. It is both very real and eternal. You've always been a decent and God-fearing man, and are uneasy about the extremist opinions carried by some of the wraiths in the local Circles. You are especially concerned with the existence of that statue; nothing good can come of its presence, and you're sure that whoever created it has more malfeasance up his sleeve.

Although you are a real member of the Menders and have truly been accepted by them, you still cannot shake the strained behavior patterns you exhibit around your fellow wraiths. Perhaps this is because you very likely pulled many of their bodies out of the ground and destroyed them. This discomfort has led you to entertain thoughts of leaving the Circle, perhaps to go over to the Fallen Comrades, or to leave the Haunt altogether.

Sergei Pravdovich

Sergei Pravdovich was only 12 years old when the German army rolled into Kiev, but the memories of the Nazi pogrom just outside the city limits haunted him all his life. He started a homemade diary to record what happened those two days in September 1941, and continuously added to its pages as the killings continued. No one knew of this diary's existence, not even his parents, and he kept it hidden even after the Nazis retreated from the city. After the war, Sergei talked to those who survived the massacres and the SS reign of terror. Very few people spoke about those days, but those who did were very open with Sergei. These stories, too, he wrote down in his tattered diary. With such a weight of evidence in his hands, Sergei realized that he and his generation were saddled with the burden of remembering and mourning the dead. The only way to accord those who were sacrificed the proper respect, he decided, was to tell the truth.

The Russia of Joseph Stalin, however, was not interested in letting the truth come out. Sergei held onto his diary until Stalin's death and Khrushchev came to power. Then, as a journalist living in Kiev, Sergei Pravdovich began to write from his diary about the horrors at Babi Yar, demanding that the thousands of Jews who had been murdered there be somehow memorialized. He met obstacles at every turn. Censor boards rejected his essays and articles referring to the massacre of Jews. Sergei was eventually fired from the paper he worked for, but continued to speak out about the injustice that the Soviet government was inflicting upon the memory of the dead. The future was too important for the truth of the past to be buried like this, Sergei Pravdovich kept proclaiming.

Sergei endured criticism from his neighbors and harassment by the police for years. His audiences grew smaller, as people did not want to risk angering the powers of the state, but still Sergei fought on. Eventually, there came what he thought was a triumph. Over 30 years after the horrors at Babi Yar, the Brezhnev government acquiesced to putting up a monument on the site of the massacre, commemorating those who had fallen. When it was unveiled, Sergei Pravdovich was furious at the blatant doctoring of the truth the monolith represented. In the back booths of bars and the front pages of underground pamphlets he ranted and raved, bent on exposing this travesty for what it was. He changed few minds, but was loud enough to attract some unwelcome attention with his protests. This would prove to be Sergei's undoing.

The KGB had been following Sergei for some time, and arrested him at the foot of the monument as he attempted to deface it one November night. The former journalist was charged with slander against the state and activities inimical

to the Soviet Union, and his trial was a travesty. Shipped to an eastern gulag, Sergei perished there.

In the Shadowlands, Sergei Pravdovich could not allow his crusade to end. Mile by frozen mile, he made his way back to Kiev, only to discover the horror that Babi Yar had become. The first thing Sergei saw upon his return home was the Shroud-hazed monument, its damned cast of darkened metal mocking the mass of humanity butchered at Babi Yar. The second was the sickening glow from the mouth of the Nihil.

Appalled, Sergei joined the Menders, and has become instrumental in the dissemination of information from Babi Yar to other Covenant sites. He has also consumed himself with the idea of working through the Shroud, hoping to make the living *remember*. It is his dream someday to make the memorial in the Skinlands a memorial of truth.

Nature: Critic

Demeanor: Driven

Circle: The Menders

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Diplomacy 2, Expression 4, Instruction 2, Intrigue 2, Search 2, Streetwise 2

Skills: Drive 2, Fast-Talk 2, Leadership 2, Misdirection 1, Storytelling 4

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 1, History 2, Investigation 2, Journalism 5, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Artifact (Pravdovich's diary) 2, Eidolon 4, Notoriety 3, Status 4

Passions: Stick up for the community among the other free camps and the Hierarchy (Loyalty) 5, Provide a catalyst for the Menders (Desire for Respect) 4

Arcanoi: Argos 2, Embody 3, Outrage 3, Mnemosynis 3, Phantasm 2

Fetters: The gulag 5, The monument in the Skinlands 4

Willpower: 9

Pathos: 9

Permanent Corpus: 8

Shadow: The Workaholic

Angst: 8

Thorns: Shadow Life, Spectre Prestige

Shadow Passions: Seize the leadership of the Circle and lead a real crusade for the Haunt's rights against the other Holocaust communities (Megalomania) 4, Fill Pravdovich with despair

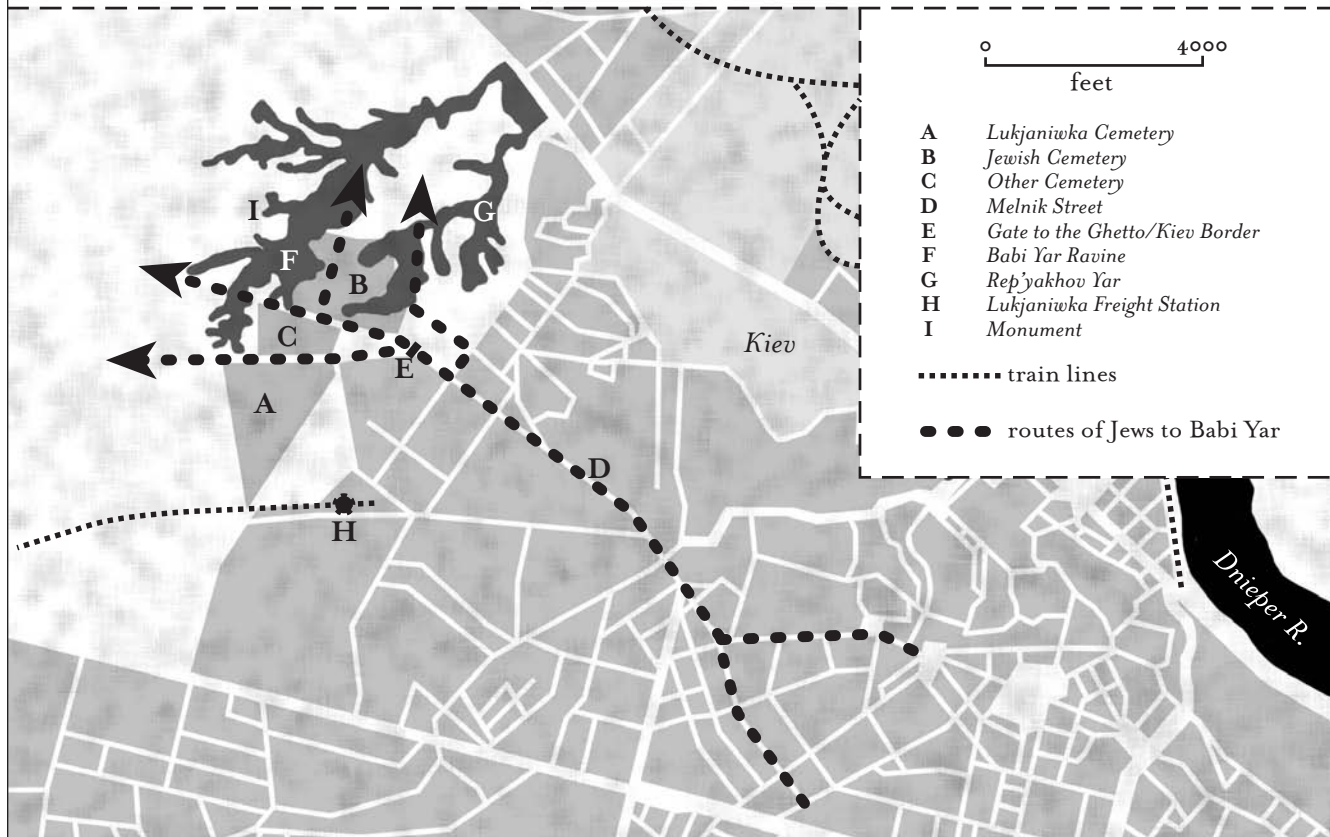
at his failures and make him succumb to Oblivion (Fear) 3, Discredit the younger, braver leader of the Fallen Comrades, Alexander Renko (Envy) 1

Image: Sergei Pravdovich appears to be in his late 40s, with sandy, unkempt hair and piercing green eyes. He dresses in a rumpled dark suit and shirt with his tie hanging askew — the epitome of Iron Curtain *haute couture*. Pravdovich is a passionate speaker, who holds forth to the members of his Circle with a booming voice and sweeping gesticulations.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a man possessed by the spirit of injustice done to the memory of the wraiths at Babi Yar, and this obsession has colored your opinions about the other Circles of Holocaust victims. You consider the Babi Yar Haunt to be your new homeland, and can be very jingoistic about the importance of its objectives over those of the many other free camps. For this you've drawn criticism from many in the Circle. Stick to your guns — the other camps have their own problems. What matters to you is the memory of what happened *here*.



Plan of the Babi Yar Massacre in Kiev, September 29 & 30, 1941.



Story Ideas

- Nikolai is convinced that he has found the woman whom he let escape, and asks the characters to accompany him in locating her and bringing her back to Babi Yar. The group sets off, but has been spotted by Marta, who has gotten wind of the plan from Nikolai's Shadow and believes this to be the perfect opportunity to try and destroy him.

- Diana approaches the characters and asks them to accompany her to the Kiev Necropolis proper, claiming she has received a possible lead on the whereabouts of her parents. The group arrives in Kiev to pursue the trail, but meet a cold

reception from the local wraiths, who are convinced that the Babi Yar dybbuks are plotting to destroy the Necropolis.

- A wraith never before seen in Babi Yar makes his way inside the barbed wire perimeter. Nikolai immediately recognizes him as Ivan Karinska, the son of the spiteful old woman in the farmhouse that fateful day. The former policeman has been watching for Marta to reappear, and asks the characters to help use Ivan as bait to draw her out, allowing him to rid the Haunt of her once and for all. Melki is opposed to the use of Ivan in this way, and attempts to convince the characters to assist him in finding a way to reach Marta's Psyche instead. The characters must choose between the two options — and who knows what Marta's ghost will say about all of this?



Behind the Wire: Oswiecim (Auschwitz-Birkenau)

by Robert Hatch

We are told that the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for. Now, at least he will know what he is fighting against.

— General Dwight David Eisenhower, upon liberating the death camps




ARBEIT MACHT FREI.

Work will make you free.

This motto, emblazoned in iron over a gate in southern Poland, greeted over two million men, women and children labeled “criminals” and “subhumans” by the lords of the Third Reich. Of these forcibly displaced immigrants, the overwhelming majority would not reemerge through that gate alive.

For they had come to Auschwitz, greatest slaughterhouse of the 20th century, and the only way to freedom was “up the chimney”: their corpses stripped of resources valuable to the Reich, hurled into crematorium ovens and carbonized to ash, then unceremoniously dumped into the swamps and bogs of the Vistula.

Here two million people were systematically murdered. They were murdered with guns, with flame, with phenol injections, toxic gas and phosphorus bombs. Some died from disease, overwork, starvation, or the blows of a kapo’s trun-



cheon. They were forced to separate from their families, forced to strip naked in public, forced to stand rigidly at attention for days at a time, forced to work barefoot in blizzards, forced to participate in sadistic tortures dubbed “medical experiments” by the Reich, forced to watch their children burn; but, frankly, such atrocities were tertiary. When all was said and done, when all the obscenities were hurled and the indignities were suffered and the horrors were inflicted, everyone died. Kaput. Up the chimney.

For really, when the final tally is made, murder is all that Auschwitz was about. It was not, strictly speaking, a concentration camp; that term implies a focus on *incarceration* — the possibility, however slight, of reform, of eventual release, of “freedom through work.” There was no hope of that in Auschwitz. According to Nazi ideology, prisoners here were biologically incapable of reform; no one was released from this most secret of camps, and the fact that a prisoner was willing and able to work remained relevant only insofar as it postponed the inevitable. Once a prisoner passed under the gates, had his head shaved and had his tattoo number inscribed in the camp records, he was effectively under sentence of death. Some prisoners ran the race better than others, but all were essentially working toward the same end — the same final freedom.

And so let us call Auschwitz-Birkenau what it was, and is: a death camp. A murder camp.

Auschwitz ceased its wholesale slaughter in 1945, but its ruins stand today, a memorial museum in Poland and the single largest Necropolis in the Western Shadowlands. Those who visit the museum, even 50 years later, complain of an eerie ambience, a palpable sense of oppression and apprehension. And they are correct, for neither time nor death has dimmed the rage, hate and pain of Auschwitz’s incorporeal residents.

Postwar Jews have concocted an ironic joke concerning the fate of European Jewry: *The pessimists went into exile; the optimists went to the death camps*. And most postwar survivors concede that to stay alive in the jaws of Auschwitz, one had to cultivate a certain mental and emotional exile, a certain callousness — indeed, a self-centered will to live that bordered on the vicious. Those who tried to retain their higher natures (or, God forbid, expected others to do so!), who refused to fight for that extra potato or that crust of moldy bread, who refused to look the other way when their bunkmate was brutalized, who refused to step on the heads of typhus patients in their struggle for the latrine — well, they died.

Auschwitz’s Dead know this doubly well, for a great many of them were on the receiving end of someone else’s struggle for survival. Most of Auschwitz’s Dead have taken that last memory — the rifle butt splitting their skull, the slab of sausage

wrested from their enervated fingers by another prisoner, the treachery that got them ousted from a survivable camp job in favor of a rival — and cradled it to their incorporeal bosoms, nurturing the pain as they did the babies whom were stripped from them and sent to the gas.

As in life, so in death. And thus, despite the best efforts of a few, Auschwitz today is a seething hive of hate, hopelessly compromised by Spectres. It remains to be seen if work will truly liberate Auschwitz’s dybbuks — or if Oblivion will prove their only freedom.

A History of Hell

Mein freund! Es geht immer weiter, immer weiter! (My friend, it goes on and on, on and on....)

— Dr. Josef Mengele, in a reflective mood, from Dr. Miklos Nyizsli’s *Auschwitz*

1940 — Mandate for Murder



In the spring of 1940, Reichsführer Himmler decided on the construction of a concentration camp in the conquered nation of Poland. The selected locale rested in the marshy tracts surrounding the Vistula River, on the site of what had been an Austrian stables and barracks. These barracks lay close to the Polish town of Oswiecim (Germanized to “Auschwitz”), and thus did the institution that was to become the greatest slaughterhouse of the Western world derive its name.

To accomplish this task, Himmler appointed a gray, bland, banal functionary whom accounts have described as resembling a clerk or grocer. But this man, Rudolph Höss, was himself a former prison inmate, had served in Sachsenhausen camp, and well understood the dynamics of running a concentration facility. Under Höss’ direction Auschwitz would evolve from a stables housing a few hundred riffraff to the world’s largest killing center — and Höss himself would become notorious as the greatest mass murderer in history.

But all that lay in the future. The Wannsee Conference, wherein the Third Reich passed sentence on all European Jews, had not yet been held; thus, the camp was intended to hold Polish political prisoners. After Höss had inspected the site, his subordinate, Rapportführer Gerhard Palitzch, arrived with Auschwitz’s first 30 prisoners — hardened German criminals

Auschwitz and Stygia

The truth about Auschwitz? There is no person who could tell the whole truth about Auschwitz.

— Josef Cyrancewicz, premier of Poland and former Auschwitz prisoner



uschwitz.

The name has left the blue and withered lips of more than one Deathlord, as in their council chamber, a Moliated pointer glides across a soulforged map of the Shadowlands to tap a peculiar festering in southern Poland. The name has appeared in Chanteurs' songs and Sandmen's phantasies; of late, the word has appeared with alarming frequency in Oracles' predictions. And frankly, the Deathlords don't know what to do.

For the Deathlords rule the Stygian Empire, and to secure their territory they must maintain at least a modicum of control over those Necropoli within the Kingdom of Iron's geographic purview — as Auschwitz unquestionably is. In typical Necropoli, however (insofar as any of those bizarre and baroque structures can be termed "typical"), the wraith population increases gradually, as souls trickle in over the generations. The average inhabitant of a city, even the most violent, dies a relatively peaceful and untroubled death, or at the very least is not wrenched from life unfulfilled. And thus can the Hierarchy patiently scrutinize those few *rara aves* who become Restless Dead, and discreetly plant its agents accordingly.

In Auschwitz — in 19 square miles of territory — two million people were slaughtered over the span of a mere five years. Most of these victims were torn from loved ones or forced to watch them slain, put to death in painful and humiliating ways, or slaughtered for offenses that can best be described as nonsensical; a grotesquely disproportionate number of victims were children or adolescents, snuffed into death before having a chance to discover life.

In other words, Auschwitz was a breeding ground for the Restless Dead. More wraiths emerged during one *selektion* than are "born" during an average generation in a European city. The dead fed on the memories of their living relatives, who joined them soon enough; relic buildings and goods sprang up like fungi after rain, and any hope of gradual Hierarchy control summarily fell apart in an Oblivion-tainted blitzkrieg.

And so today, Stygian intelligence agencies fearfully reckon the Camp of the Dead to be the second-largest Necropolis in the Western world, and the largest in the Western Shadowlands. Behind Auschwitz's screaming winds, hissing fences and soulforged barbed wire may well squat the greatest potential military threat the Kingdom of Iron has ever faced: tens of thousands — at least — of angry, vengeful wraiths — if, indeed, wraiths they still are. And, the Deathlords muse, it need not be pointed out that Auschwitz's denizens, be they wraith, Spectre or hybrid thereof, cannot be expected to look with favor upon a militaristic, bureaucratic, regimented Hierarchy — or upon the overlords who run it....

all. Palitzch appointed these prisoners as *kapos*. (Prisoner #1, Bruno Brodniewicz, was appointed "camp senior" and became a great crony of Palitzch.) Thus began the dominance of the green triangles in Auschwitz, a dominance that lasted through the camp's history and contributed in no small fashion to the future inmates' misery.

Seven-hundred and twenty-eight Polish prisoners were transferred to the nascent camp in short order, and more steadily trickled in thereafter. Naturally, someone had to keep an eye on these criminals, and so the original 15 SS were swiftly supplemented by 100 more. In time, the SS would number over 3,000, and the barracks would become sprawling dens of vice,

where German guards feasted, smoked and drank themselves sick on food, tobacco and viands stolen from the dead.

As the population grew, so did the buildings: The first crematorium — formerly a munitions bunker — raised its chimney above the Sola marshes, swiftly followed by the punishment block — the infamous Block 11. And punishment was indeed in the works — the first executions of Polish political prisoners took place there on the 22nd of November.

As of 1940's end, 7879 prisoners had been interred at Auschwitz. By 1945, out of two million who passed through the camp's gates, only a few thousand still lived.



Lebensraum

The basic Auschwitz barracks was a long, low-slung building, capped by a tin roof and covered in green tar-paper. It was modeled on a plan for a stables, and in normal use, each such stables was designed to house 50 horses. Into this space the Nazis crowded approximately 800 prisoners — sometimes as many as 1,000.

Sleep — for the three hours or so it was allowed — took place on hard wooden bunks stacked three high. Three persons were expected to sleep on each one-person bunk, and so vicious fights broke out among prisoners, who bit, kicked and clawed their neighbors in a desperate attempt to obtain an extra centimeter or two of space. Those who lost these struggles had to sleep on the floor.

Sanitary facilities were at best a joke. Prisoners had to crawl over the bodies of hundreds of other inmates to reach the latrine. Even this sort of effort was problematic, as it was not unknown for kapos or SS men to come upon prisoners so occupied and, in a fit of mirth, shove them bodily into the piss and shit. Also, if too many people struggled in and out of the barracks door — thereby annoying the block senior — she could simply declare the bathrooms forbidden. Accordingly, many prisoners, too ill or afraid to use the latrine, voided themselves into the bowls they would use to eat their meager meals the next morning.

Naturally, under such conditions, prison and prisoner hygiene deteriorated in short order. Most prisoners' bodies disintegrated into canvases of boil-ridden skin and brittle bones, and the prisoners were compelled to share their barracks with rats, lice and other vermin. It was not unknown for a pack of rats to assault a dying prisoner, bloody from a beating, in the middle of the night.

1941 — The Perfection of Slaughter

The year started off well for Höss and the SS. Following meetings with executives of the I.G. Farben Company, the SS made an agreement to supply slave workers for construction of I.G. Farben factories in the nearby town of Buna. (To provide room for the operation, Auschwitz personnel deported the area's Jews.) I.G. Farben agreed to pay a wage of four Re-

ichsmarks per day for skilled workers and three for unskilled workers. The wage was paid to the SS, of course, not to the workers themselves.

Work usually lasted 12 hours a day — after the prisoners' four-hour roll call. This labor was performed on 1,500 calories a day and three to four hours' sleep. Prisoners were expected to march to and from their jobs — often several kilometers' distance — and, to prevent idle hands making mischief, prisoners had to carry five bricks with them on the return trip (which was made in march step).

Special projects were undertaken by penal companies — gangs of prisoners singled out for special punishments. Penal companies worked on the camp's most grueling projects, such as toiling in gravel pits and digging canals. Work continued all day long, even during other prisoners' (admittedly inadequate) lunch breaks and rest periods, and, lest the prisoners shirk their duties, the most sadistic kapos oversaw the penal laborers. Those who collapsed or could not keep up were beaten to death by these kapos — and the pace of labor was deliberately designed to induce such collapse. Essentially, assignment to the penal company constituted a prolonged death sentence.

So impressive was the nascent camp's operation — and so sweeping were Nazi gains in Eastern Europe — that Reichsführer Himmler, following a visit to the camp, ordered the facilities enlarged to house 30,000 prisoners. Furthermore, Himmler ordered the construction of a sister camp in the town of Brzezinka (Germanized to Birkenau), which would hold no fewer than 100,000 prisoners of war. These prisoners, Himmler decreed, would work tirelessly for the betterment of the Nazi juggernaut — laboring in fields of agriculture, industry, crafts, and above all, munitions.

But even as the High Command made plans for those prisoners fit and able to work, it concocted darker fates for those not so fortunate. Though the Wannsee Conference had yet to take place, the first sprouts of what would become the Final Solution began poking through the Lager's bloodstained soil.

The killings started slowly, tentatively, like a new lover's first bashful caresses. The first to die were a contingent of the ill and disabled, who were shipped to a mental hospital in Königstein and gassed with carbon monoxide. This proved successful enough that other ailing prisoners began to be murdered, but via injections of various chemicals — benzine, phenol, evipan and hydrogen peroxide — into the heart. Finally, as an experiment, a group of 250 sick prisoners and 600 Russian POWs were herded into the bowels of Auschwitz's Block 11 and gassed with Zyklon B.

At about this time the SS began mass executions, shooting prisoners in the back of the neck with using small-caliber

Appel

Roll call.

Remember it? It was a fairly harmless activity, as school functions went. You, along with the other kids, listened for your name (or not), and when it was called you said, "Here" or "Present" or whatever. There were maybe 20 to 30 other kids in your class, and so roll call took about three to five minutes.

Auschwitz also had its roll call — the *appel* — and from our sheltered position it is hard to imagine why this activity was among the most dreaded of camp institutions. But then, our roll call took place in a heated classroom, not outdoors at 4 A.M., rain or shine, during temperatures that plummeted well below zero. We had a couple of dozen persons to account for, not tens of thousands — and so our roll calls did not take hours at a time. Nor did we have to stand rigidly, torturously at attention through the whole ordeal — and (one would hope) we were not randomly beaten by the club-wielding sadists calling our names.

Everyone had to be accounted for — even those who had died in the night. Their naked corpses were hauled to the *appel* and held stiffly upright by their fellows until such time as the dead were duly registered and crossed off the camp rolls. If even a single prisoner remained unaccounted for, no one could leave — and if a prisoner had escaped, the entire company stood there, in a military rictus, until the fugitive was apprehended. (Those who stumbled, voided themselves, etc., were usually beaten to death.) One such roll call lasted 20 hours — in the middle of a Polish winter.

bullets. These murders were carried out at the wall between Blocks 10 and 11, later known as the "Wall of Death."

In retrospect, however, perhaps the most ominous event of 1941 was the initial construction of the Birkenau camp, where the vast majority of the camp's gas-murders would take place. Construction of Birkenau started in October 1941, right as winter began to howl over the Polish plains. Befitting its role as a death camp, Birkenau began to claim victims even before its completion, as the debilitated prisoners participating in its construction expired in droves from starvation, exhaustion, cold and illness.





Colors

In its five years of operation Auschwitz-Birkenau embraced a staggering variety of prisoners. Jews, Socialists, Communists, murderers, thieves, sex offenders, Jehovah's Witnesses, Russian soldiers, Gypsies and a host of other "undesirables" passed under the gates marked ARBEIT MACHT FREI. All suffered, all were brutalized by the guards, and all ultimately faced the spectre of the chimney.

But even among the lowest-common-denominator inhabitants of a concentration camp, not all the victims were condemned equally; the ever-orderly servants of the Third Reich took meticulous pains to categorize the enemies of the state according to their precise transgressions.

Auschwitz, of course, distinguished its prisoners by forcibly tattooing their serial numbers on their left forearms, but in addition adopted the practice, ubiquitous to all KZs, of classifying the inmates according to the specific infraction they had committed against the state. These categories were delineated by triangles of various colors sewn onto the left breast and right trouser leg of each prisoner's uniform.

Political prisoners — those deemed enemies of the Nazi philosophy and state — wore a red triangle, symbolizing Communism (though by no means were all political prisoners Communists). Various left-wing and other antifascist party members, as well as members of the underground in occupied nations, were punished by internment in the death camps. The reds constituted the majority of the camp resistance movement, and they waged a vicious struggle with the greens for control of camp institutions that offered their members a higher likelihood of survival.

Criminals — German or otherwise — were marked with the green triangle. The first 20 prisoners, who were rewarded with positions in the prison hierarchy, were greens. Accordingly, the Auschwitz prison government was largely a tool of the greens — often (though not always) a vicious pack of robbers, murderers and rapists. The SS favored the largely Aryan greens (they were not so very different, after all), and the greens returned the "kindness" by using their status as kapos to terrorize and brutalize the other prisoners, especially the Jews.

Related to the criminals, but not deemed so much a threat, were the wearers of the black triangle: the "asocials," the "shiftless elements" — a motley swarm of alcoholics, wifebeaters, pimps, petty thieves, prostitutes, gigolos and the like. The blacks, like the greens, were often German citizens imprisoned for nonpolitical crimes, and thus were considerably cozier with the SS than their fellows were.

Other colors included the pink triangle, used to denote homosexuals; the purple triangle, signifying Jehovah's Witnesses; and the brown triangle, for Gypsies.

Male homosexuals were treated particularly abominably, even by the standards of camp inmates. (Even the Jews abused them.) They were assigned to the worst of the penal details and even made to shovel snow with their bare hands. Camp personnel made efforts to "cure" the "bum-fuckers" by forcing them to perform in the camp brothels. Should this "therapy" not produce results, other methods were employed — including a broomstick shoved into the "offender's" anus, often leading to rupturing and lethal hemorrhaging. Ironically, child molesters, rapists and other sex criminals were classified as green or black triangles, and thus occupied a considerably higher place on the KZ status chain than did consenting gays.

Jews, of course, were the objects of the Reich's special attention, and as such were forced to wear a yellow triangle in addition to any of the other classification triangles. This triangle was worn under the classification triangle and inverted in relation to it, thus forming the six-pointed Star of David. Naturally, Jews were at the absolute nadir of the camp pecking order (though certain skilled Jews could better their lot just like all the other prisoners). They suffered mercilessly at the hands of kapos, who liked to demonstrate their slavish devotion to the SS by beating up any "fucking Jew" in reach.

Sadly, prisoners vented more hate upon prisoners of other triangles than they did upon their captors. Rage that could have been reserved for an uprising against the SS was directed at the more vulnerable members of an opposing group. The reds hated the greens; the German prisoners hated the Jews; the Slovaks despised the Hungarians; and, above all, the old concentrationaries held the *zugangi* (new arrivals) in utmost contempt. Each group clawed and maneuvered its members into positions in the camp hierarchy — even if doing so meant condemning other prisoners to the gas.

Even more sadly, it was this system of categorization, moreso than the machine guns or the electrified wire, that kept the terror machinery of Auschwitz well oiled. Höss himself admitted in his memoirs, "In the concentration camp, the rivalries were passionately maintained by the camp administration and constantly fanned in order to prevent any strong movement of solidarity among the prisoners.... Without the help of these rivalries, it would have been impossible to keep thousands of prisoners in harness no matter how strong the camp leadership.... 'Divide and conquer' is used not only in high politics, but also in the operation of a concentration camp."



The Soviet Prisoners

Auschwitz was ideally located to receive the fodder of the Nazi blitzkrieg in the East, and so the camp quickly assimilated Russian prisoners of war. Approximately 10,000 Soviet POWs marched to Auschwitz during the year 1941. By the summer of 1942, only a few hundred remained alive.

The fate of these POWs was ghastly even by the standards of Auschwitz. Nazi captors force-marched the prisoners from the front without food. Instead, at intervals along the march, the POWs were turned loose in fields and “permitted” to gorge on mice, worms and whatever else they could scrounge. Not surprisingly, they arrived at Auschwitz as emaciated skeletons.

At this point, the merciful Nazis immediately put them to work — and, again not surprisingly, the death rate elevated stratospherically. Many Russians dropped dead at their work, even as they crammed turnips and potatoes in their mouths; others simply staggered about mindlessly, too starved even to consume the food given to them. The worst of the Russians’ suffering came during the building of Birkenau, in the winter of 1941. Forced to trudge half-naked through knee-deep mire in freezing weather, even the healthiest of the Russians succumbed to pneumonia, heart failure and other fatal ailments.

Some Russians survived by “scrounging” on each other. Cases of cannibalism were endemic among the POWs, and it was a common occurrence for the Nazis to find a half-eaten

Russian corpse carelessly thrown amid Birkenau’s fields or drainage ditches. The starving Russians also ceaselessly fought each other for rations, even going so far as to beat each other to death or shove one another into the electrified wire.

The Nazis were more than happy to dispose of those Russians spared by their fellows. The SS periodically raided the Russian section of the camp, “selecting” Russians and beating them to death with shovels and pickaxes. Indeed, so high was the death toll among the Russians that Auschwitz’s Krema I (the only one in operation at the time) could not dispose of all the corpses. Instead, they were buried in a mass grave at Birkenau.

Today, the Restless remnants of the Russian POWs still haunt Birkenau, primarily in the vicinity of Sheol and the site of their mass grave. As befits the horror of their incarceration and deaths, the Russians became Spectres one and all, and constitute one of the most feared bands in the region. (Those few Russians who did not emerge as Spectres upon their demise were summarily consumed by their Oblivion-tainted former comrades.) The Russian Spectres are allegedly led by a powerful Shade, who is referred to as Koshchei the Deathless. This Koshchei is by all accounts a monstrous brute, every bit as cruel as his former captors; indeed, he is rumored to feast on the Corpora of captured dybbuks.

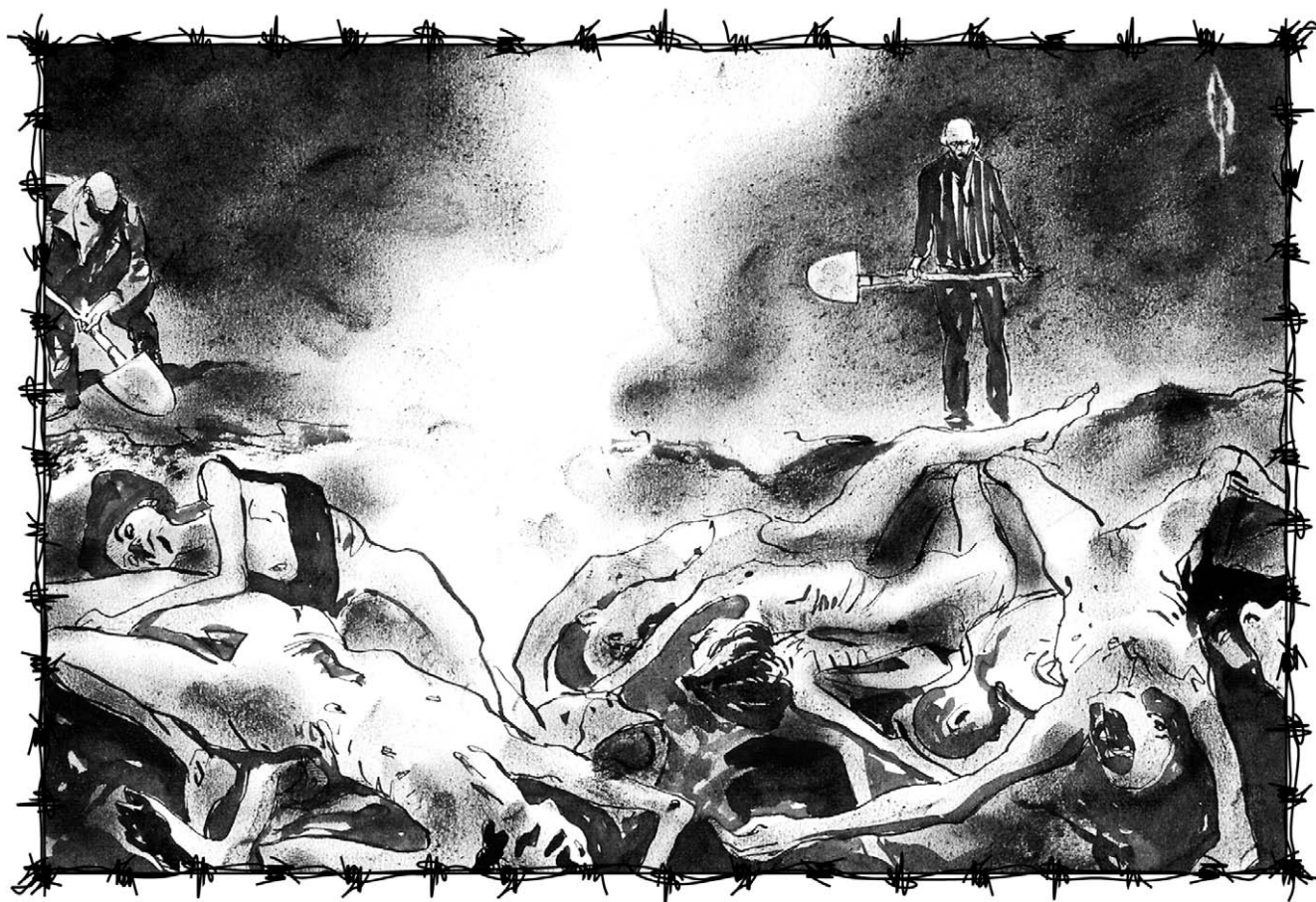
1942 — The Final Solution

With the “discovery” of Zyklon B, Höss quickly realized he had hit on something. Execution by Zyklon B was quick, efficient, relatively cheap, and spared the SS from actually having to listen to the screams of prisoners cut down by gunfire. It was the perfect solution to Himmler’s decree that Auschwitz was to be the industrialized abattoir for the Jews of the East.

And so, having greased the axles in 1941, the Nazis spun the wheels of murder inexorably into motion. January 1942 marked an important event: the first mass gassing of Jews sent specifically to their deaths. Following this “ribbon-cutting” ceremony, gassings took place regularly. These murders were conducted in a farmhouse especially converted for the purpose (the days of the great crematoria were yet to come) and the bodies buried in mass graves.

The Nazis employed other murder methods as well. Aryan prisoners in Auschwitz’s hospitals and infirmaries still received phenol injections in the heart, other prisoners were disposed of with bullets to the back of the neck, and in at least one instance, a group of sick prisoners was herded into an enclosed section of Birkenau and beaten to death with clubs. But Höss knew efficiency when he saw it, and so Auschwitz gradually became synonymous with gas chambers and Zyklon B.

1942 saw the camp swell exponentially, like a festering boil on the skin of a typhus patient. Cattle cars came from all over Europe — France, Slovakia, Belgium, Yugoslavia — to disgorge their human cargo, and it was during the spring of 1942 that the first women came to the camp. To their dismay and embarrassment, these women were processed in the same manner as were the men, and to clothe them, the Nazis provided uniforms looted from dead Soviet POWs.



As fast as new prisoners arrived at the camp, however, Auschwitz's personnel worked feverishly to ensure that old prisoners left permanently. Höss began authorizing selections of prisoners from within the camp. Selectees were loaded onto trucks and taken to a detainment facility, and from there to one of the gas chambers.

It was also in 1942 that Reichsführer Himmler toured the camp, among other things witnessing a "special action" from beginning to end. He must have been impressed: He promoted Höss to lieutenant colonel, and later that year issued a decree that all Jews were to be transferred to Auschwitz and Majdanek.

Before Himmler left, he ordered Höss to accelerate the building of Birkenau. It was to be Europe's premier extermination camp, and there were many, many Jews awaiting transport and death. Prisoners labored feverishly under the kapos' watchful eyes and ready truncheons, often working themselves to death to hasten the completion of Birkenau.

And so the Final Solution had truly begun, and too many optimistic Jews were once and for all proven wrong.

Auschwitz-Birkenau no longer held any pretense of being a concentration camp — a place where even criminals and subhumans would at least be preserved and valued as labor. It was a death camp.


As if Heaven or Hell saw fit to confirm the camp's new-found role, waves of typhus engulfed the Lager, smiting prisoner and guard alike. Carriers were quickly quarantined and killed. Finally, in desperation, Höss had the corpses in the mass graves dug up and burned (this action also irrevocably disrupted the Fetters of some wraiths and Spectres who had begun to prowl the camp).

Poison: For the Destruction of Parasites

Na, gib ihnen schon zu fressen. (All right, give them something to chew on.)

— Oberschaarführer Moll, giving the extermination order at Auschwitz-Birkenau

The primary method of extermination in the Auschwitz camp was a lethal gas manufactured by the Degesch Company;



this gas was called Zyklon, or Cyclon, B. The term “Cyclon” was an acronym taken from the names of the gas’s primary components: cyanide, chlorine and nitrogen. Prior to its use at Auschwitz, Zyklon B was a pesticide used to exterminate rats and cockroaches. It left a bluish stain when sprayed, coloring the surfaces of the chambers where it was deployed.

Though camp kommandant Rudolph Höss, in his memoirs, describes the deaths as painless and the bodies as peaceful, more unbiased accounts tell a different story. Various members of the Sonderkommandos assigned to loot and dispose of the dead spoke in no uncertain terms of “lattices of bodies”: mounds of distended torsos and tangled limbs sprawled to the ceiling, as stronger members trampled their weaker brethren in a frantic attempt to escape the gas; bodies covered in bruises, lacerations and welts inflicted by the neighbors who attempted to use them as living ladders to gain a few more seconds of air; fingers broken and arms dislocated in a frantic struggle to beat down the walls; blood from ruptured lungs and sinuses bubbling out the noses and mouths of faces so blue and swollen as to be virtually unrecognizable; and the whole tableau stained with urine and feces, as bladders and bowels spasmed in the final death-throes. Death, though certain, was by no means instant (particularly since the ever-efficient Nazis utilized the minimum amount of gas necessary to ensure a kill) and the bloated remnants of the victims’ faces spoke clearly of the agony they had undergone.

Selektion

Arriving Jewish prisoners were forced to undergo a process known as *selektion*. Upon disembarking from the cattle cars used to transport them, victims were roughly herded before an SS physician, who inspected the new arrivals to make sure they were capable of manual labor. Those deemed healthy enough to work were waved to the right and subsequently ushered into the camp. The disabled, the elderly, children under the age of 14, pregnant women and others deemed too weak to contribute were waved to the left and subsequently executed.

Further selections occurred periodically in camp, usually on Jewish holidays, as the ever-vigilant Nazis sought to guard themselves against typhus epidemics and cull the weak. During such inspections, prisoners — male and female — were required to strip and jog past an SS physician. Prisoners who appeared healthy and not too emaciated were allowed to put their clothes back on and go to work. Those not so fortunate were waved to the gas chambers.

One Louse Can Kill

Those inmates fortunate enough to survive the gauntlet of horrors that was everyday life in the Lager still had to contend against a legion of invisible threats. Diseases of all sorts ran rampant throughout the camp. Foremost among these were typhus and dysentery.

Typhus is a loathsome disease characterized by suppurating sores, lesions and abscesses; blackened tongues; fever; the vomiting of blackish sludge; and cranial pressure. It was transmitted by body lice, which were endemic to the camp as they fed on blood and pus from prisoners’ various untreated wounds and abscesses. Waves of typhus felled thousands — prisoners and guards alike — and inhabitants of typhus-stricken barracks were often sent one and all to the gas chambers.

Dysentery is a gastrointestinal disorder characterized by the body’s inability to retain food, which is instead passed as gouts of bloody diarrhea. Sufferers of dysentery display discolored, greenish faces and exude a rank stench. Dysentery is not so contagious as typhus, but equally as lethal.

1943 — Devouring Flames

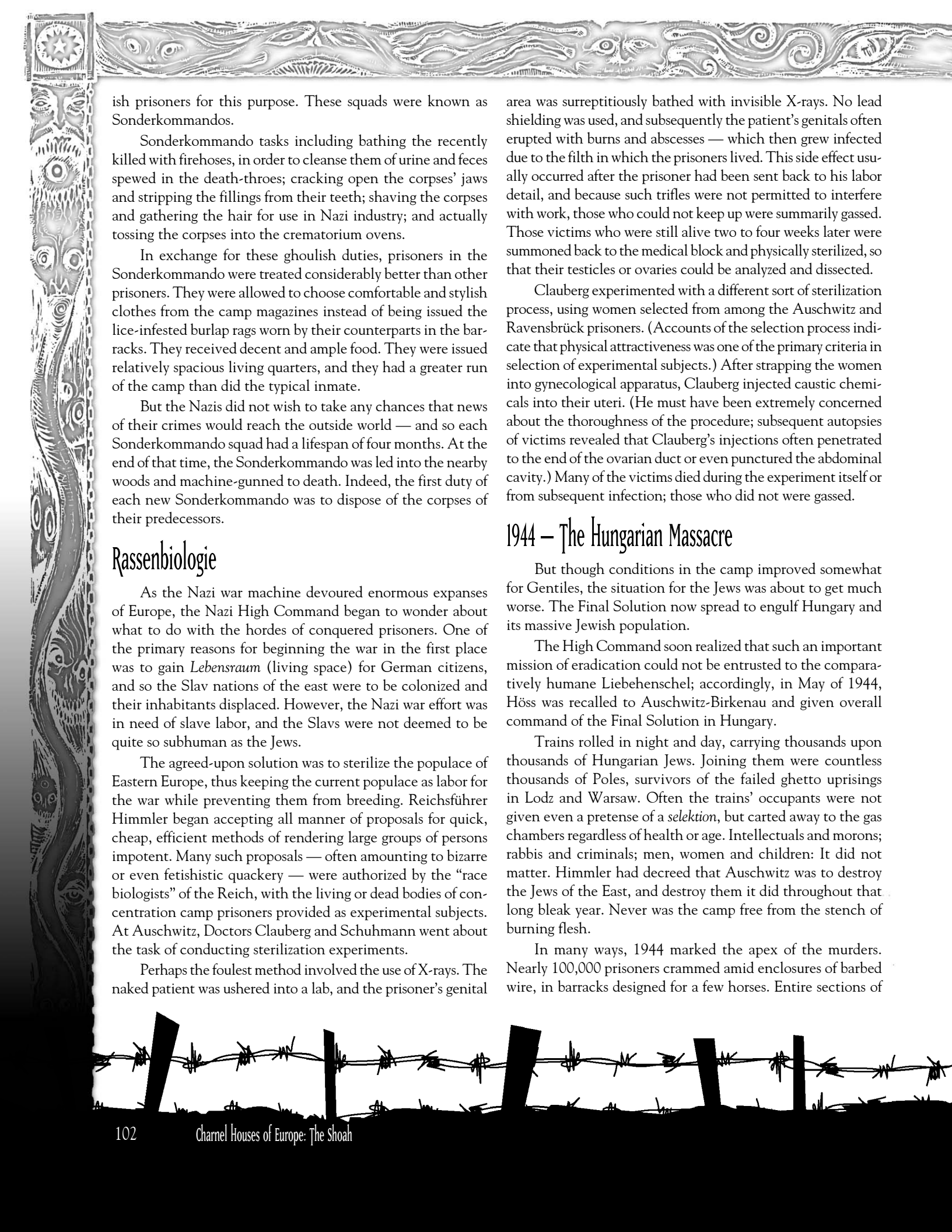
In the spring of 1943 the Birkenau Kremas were completed, one by one. These crematoria — four of them — dwarfed the one already in operation at Auschwitz proper. Now the Final Solution could proceed in earnest.

Trainloads of Jews from all over Europe arrived to meet their doom. Some trainloads were sent one and all to the gas; others were sent through the *selektion* mechanism and had the strong culled from the weak. Gassing and burning continued day and night (Höss estimated that up to 20,000 prisoners could be exterminated in one day), and so the black smoke and rank stench of charred human flesh permeated the camp.

Amazingly enough, life in Auschwitz improved — albeit marginally — toward the end of the year. Höss’ actions as kommandant of Auschwitz earned him a promotion to Inspector of Concentration Camps, and to fill his jackboots the High Command appointed SS Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Liebehenschel. Liebehenschel proved somewhat mild, by SS standards: He made efforts to curb the kapos’ random beating of prisoners; marginally increased prisoners’ rations; and even installed a swimming pool, with swimming privileges to be awarded to particularly well-behaved prisoners (Liebehenschel took over in November — well into the brutal Polish winter — but it’s the thought that counts).

Sonderkommandos

Naturally, the Nazis did not wish to stoop to the odious task of disposing with the corpses of their victims, and so they implemented the formation of special squads of Jew-



ish prisoners for this purpose. These squads were known as Sonderkommandos.

Sonderkommando tasks including bathing the recently killed with firehoses, in order to cleanse them of urine and feces spewed in the death-throes; cracking open the corpses' jaws and stripping the fillings from their teeth; shaving the corpses and gathering the hair for use in Nazi industry; and actually tossing the corpses into the crematorium ovens.

In exchange for these ghoulish duties, prisoners in the Sonderkommando were treated considerably better than other prisoners. They were allowed to choose comfortable and stylish clothes from the camp magazines instead of being issued the lice-infested burlap rags worn by their counterparts in the barracks. They received decent and ample food. They were issued relatively spacious living quarters, and they had a greater run of the camp than did the typical inmate.

But the Nazis did not wish to take any chances that news of their crimes would reach the outside world — and so each Sonderkommando squad had a lifespan of four months. At the end of that time, the Sonderkommando was led into the nearby woods and machine-gunned to death. Indeed, the first duty of each new Sonderkommando was to dispose of the corpses of their predecessors.

Rassenbiologie

As the Nazi war machine devoured enormous expanses of Europe, the Nazi High Command began to wonder about what to do with the hordes of conquered prisoners. One of the primary reasons for beginning the war in the first place was to gain *Lebensraum* (living space) for German citizens, and so the Slav nations of the east were to be colonized and their inhabitants displaced. However, the Nazi war effort was in need of slave labor, and the Slavs were not deemed to be quite so subhuman as the Jews.

The agreed-upon solution was to sterilize the populace of Eastern Europe, thus keeping the current populace as labor for the war while preventing them from breeding. Reichsführer Himmler began accepting all manner of proposals for quick, cheap, efficient methods of rendering large groups of persons impotent. Many such proposals — often amounting to bizarre or even fetishistic quackery — were authorized by the “race biologists” of the Reich, with the living or dead bodies of concentration camp prisoners provided as experimental subjects. At Auschwitz, Doctors Clauberg and Schuhmann went about the task of conducting sterilization experiments.

Perhaps the foulest method involved the use of X-rays. The naked patient was ushered into a lab, and the prisoner's genital

area was surreptitiously bathed with invisible X-rays. No lead shielding was used, and subsequently the patient's genitals often erupted with burns and abscesses — which then grew infected due to the filth in which the prisoners lived. This side effect usually occurred after the prisoner had been sent back to his labor detail, and because such trifles were not permitted to interfere with work, those who could not keep up were summarily gassed. Those victims who were still alive two to four weeks later were summoned back to the medical block and physically sterilized, so that their testicles or ovaries could be analyzed and dissected.

Clauberg experimented with a different sort of sterilization process, using women selected from among the Auschwitz and Ravensbrück prisoners. (Accounts of the selection process indicate that physical attractiveness was one of the primary criteria in selection of experimental subjects.) After strapping the women into gynecological apparatus, Clauberg injected caustic chemicals into their uteri. (He must have been extremely concerned about the thoroughness of the procedure; subsequent autopsies of victims revealed that Clauberg's injections often penetrated to the end of the ovarian duct or even punctured the abdominal cavity.) Many of the victims died during the experiment itself or from subsequent infection; those who did not were gassed.

1944 – The Hungarian Massacre

But though conditions in the camp improved somewhat for Gentiles, the situation for the Jews was about to get much worse. The Final Solution now spread to engulf Hungary and its massive Jewish population.

The High Command soon realized that such an important mission of eradication could not be entrusted to the comparatively humane *Liebehenschel*; accordingly, in May of 1944, Höss was recalled to Auschwitz-Birkenau and given overall command of the Final Solution in Hungary.

Trains rolled in night and day, carrying thousands upon thousands of Hungarian Jews. Joining them were countless thousands of Poles, survivors of the failed ghetto uprisings in Lodz and Warsaw. Often the trains' occupants were not given even a pretense of a *selektion*, but carted away to the gas chambers regardless of health or age. Intellectuals and morons; rabbis and criminals; men, women and children: It did not matter. Himmler had decreed that Auschwitz was to destroy the Jews of the East, and destroy them it did throughout that long bleak year. Never was the camp free from the stench of burning flesh.

In many ways, 1944 marked the apex of the murders. Nearly 100,000 prisoners crammed amid enclosures of barbed wire, in barracks designed for a few horses. Entire sections of

the camp were summarily quarantined and sent to the gas, as the Nazis, fearful of Allied invasion, began to sweep Auschwitz under the rug. The pace of killing whipped into a frenzied maelstrom, as the machinery of the Lager frantically sought to devour all of Europe's Jews before the ever-more-certain end came....

Something had to snap. And in the fall of 1944 it did, when a plan was put into fruition. The members of the 12th Sonderkommando were well aware of their limited lifespan; having been informed by the camp underground that the hour of doom was nearly upon them, the 12th — alone among Sonderkommandos — made plans for a desperate escape.

Working with members of the camp underground, the Sonderkommando smuggled gunpowder into the death chambers where they worked. Their plan was to blow up one of the Kremas and, using that as a distraction, overwhelm the guards, make for a section of the wire previously shut down by the camp underground, cut through, and run for the loop of the Vistula. Once lost in the surrounding woods, they would attempt to join Polish resistance movements in the area.

Ambitious, yes. Desperate, certainly. But what other choice did they have?

And so the 12th Sonderkommando rose in revolt, and two SS guards were hurled alive into the ovens. In a bizarre turn of events, the SS dogs refused to attack the Sonder men. (Ghostly

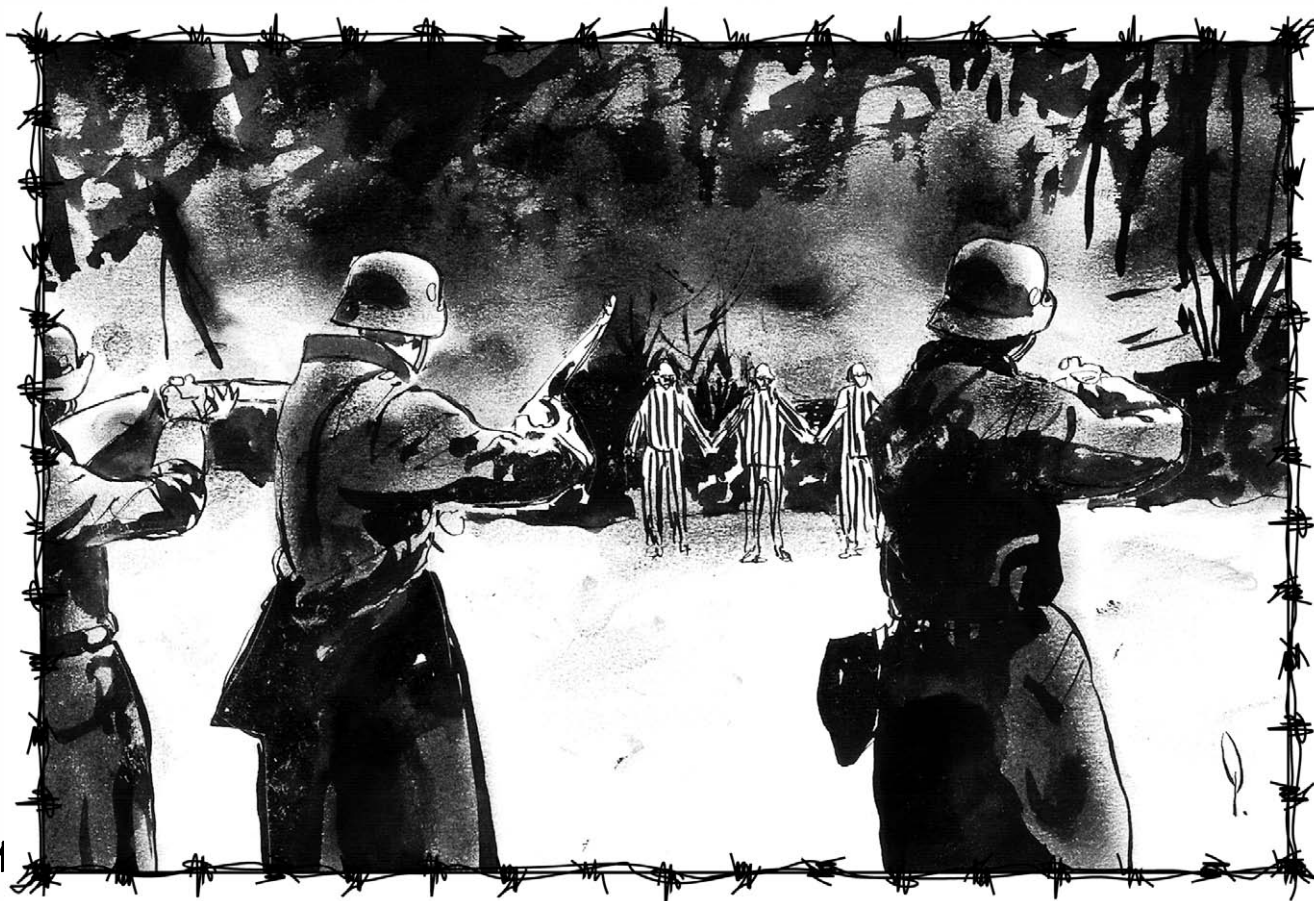
intervention, or simply coincidence?) Krema IV erupted, explosives blasting its roof into the sky. This was the most tangible victory of the revolt, as the crematorium remained inoperative for the rest of the camp's existence.


Unfortunately, the SS was able to keep the various workers of Kremas II, III and IV from linking up. Scattered and overwhelmed, the surviving Sonder men ran for the Vistula, but fled in the wrong direction. They were recaptured and summarily executed with machine-guns and flamethrowers. In the end, all 853 Sonder men had died — but they had taken 70 SS men with them.

The vengeful Dead of Auschwitz could not have been happier.

The Camp Underground

Although from 1942 on, Auschwitz was specifically designed to kill Jews, the camp still incarcerated its fair share of political prisoners. Furthermore, many other triangles of prisoners allowed themselves to be recruited into political movements behind the wire. Accordingly, a large antifascist underground movement sprang up among the inhabitants of Auschwitz. This organization, which Höss dubbed the “underground,” was primarily devoted to the survival of its members, but also strove to work against the SS in whatever small ways it could.





The underground played a deadly game of human chess with the green triangles and the SS. Underground life in Auschwitz became a continual struggle to place one's "pieces" — prisoners loyal to the underground cause — in favored positions in the camp, whereby they could "organize" extra food and goods, "lose" prisoners too sick to work by burying them in mazes of bureaucracy, and otherwise keep resistance members alive. Often this was done at the expense of green triangles, sadistic kapos or — less pleasantly — innocent prisoners whose crime was that they were not members of the underground. More than one kapo or prisoner who offended the underground was "mysteriously" summoned to the camp infirmary and given a lethal injection in the heart.

Toward war's end, the underground stockpiled guns and homemade grenades, preparing for a revolt should Allied forces draw near. This uprising never materialized, save in the aborted escape attempt of the 12th Sonderkommando.

The SS, of course, was swift to retaliate against any proven, suspected or presumed underground member. The cells of Auschwitz's Block 11 constantly rang with the screams of prisoners brutally tortured by SS and Gestapo in search of confessions or information.

1945 — The March of Death

By 1945, the sound of bombs could be heard roaring on the horizon, and it was obvious that the war would soon be over. The machinery of death, which had ground up so many people so efficiently in 1944, began to grind to a halt. There were no more *selektions*; no more gassings; no more executions.

The impending collapse was obvious. SS staggered around openly drunk, and the crushing terror of totalitarianism was replaced by a nerve-wracking anarchy. Rumors flew: Would the SS kill everyone in the camp? Would the Soviets arrive too late? Would the prisoners all be burned at once, so the secret of Auschwitz would never be told?

Many things, indeed, began to burn: The camp records burned, and the storehouses with their plunder from murdered millions; and then the Birkenau crematoria erupted for the last time in gouts of purifying flame as the SS blew them up, one by one. The Oswiecim power station burned, a target of Soviet bombs, and the camp plunged into darkness.

The prisoners suffered a multitude of fates: Some were summarily shot, while the weak and ill were left in the camp *sans* electricity, food or water. However, most survivors were rounded up by the SS, herded into ragged columns, and handed a sausage, a hunk of bread, and a blanket. Auschwitz was being evacuated, they were told, and they would march

The Gypsy Camp

Germany's position with regard to the Gypsies was never so clear as it was *vis-a-vis* the Jews; indeed, a number of Gypsies served in the German army. Nonetheless, in 1942, Himmler gave the order that all Gypsies not of the two "main tribes" (yet another categorization of Nazi *rassenbiologie*) were to be "resettled" in Auschwitz.

During the war, over 20,000 Gypsies were registered at Birkenau — marked with a brown triangle and a special form of the standard Auschwitz tattoo — and interred in their own enclosure.

This enclosure was a cross between a ghetto and a zoo; filth and disease wrought havoc among the gypsies the way it did among the other prisoners. Höss wrote warmly of the Gypsies, calling them his "favorite prisoners." The infamous "Angel of Death," Dr. Josef Mengele, enjoyed the company of Gypsy children. But the fact remains that by the summer of 1944, 15,000 Gypsies had died amid the muck of Birkenau.

The fate of the survivors was no better. On August 2, 1944, Höss ordered the liquidation of the Gypsy camp. To trick the Gypsies into the crematoria, the SS distributed rations of bread and salami and told the Gypsies they were being deported to another camp. The ruse worked, and so the surviving Gypsies were gassed one and all. It is interesting to note that in the World of Darkness, not a one of the Gypsies' vaunted vampiric protectors — neither Ravnos nor Gangrel nor Old Country Tzimisce — lifted a talon to stop their flocks' march to the gas.

into Germany. (They were not told, of course, that once in Germany they were to be executed, so that Auschwitz's secret might remain forever untold. But most of the prisoners were already familiar with Auschwitz's ways, and did not need to be informed of something so obvious.)

The prisoners did know — very well — that to disobey the SS was to die. And so they marched. Those who could not keep up were shot. Those who stumbled were shot. Those who paused to attempt to rub warmth into frostbitten feet were shot. Those who looked as though they were going to make a break for the woods were shot.



Onward the survivors marched. Many would perish on that last fateful trek. Some would die in other camps — in Dachau, in Buchenwald, in Gross-Rosen. Some would live, in a manner of speaking, as the Allies rescued them from hell and told them — bereaved, decrepit and impoverished though they were — to try to forget what had happened and start anew.

The Liberation

When, on January 27, 1945, the Soviets arrived, they had crawled across hostile soil and had engaged in firefights with the camp's remaining SS. They were veterans of the bloodiest war in their nation's bloody history, and much of the carnage had taken place on their soil. They were no strangers to death.

Nothing could have prepared them for what they found.

Six hundred scarecrows lay sprawled on the camp grounds, victims of starvation, chill, or final bullets from the SS. Survivors — about 7,600 in all — tottered to greet their liberators or groaned their thanks from the pallets on which they lay. They were a motley band of all nations, genders and ages — and here

the SS had inadvertently disproved its own party's theories, for in the viewing of that group of emaciated, sore-covered, filthy, lice-ridden things, who could have told Aryan from Jew, man from woman, human from monster?

Some survivors could not be saved; some died from the very food their liberators provided them, as their ruined bodies refused to process the meals that had been so long denied them. A few lived, and told their stories, and it is because of their courage and tenacity and heroic unwillingness to let the world forget what had happened that White Wolf can publish a book such as this.

And so for 50 years, an Iron Curtain clanked down, signaling an end to the tragedy that was Auschwitz. The grounds were left more or less intact, a memorial to the two million who had gone "up the chimney." A museum was built on the site, and the World of Darkness continued as it always had: The vampires tallied their wins and losses, and the werewolves derided the gains of the Wyrms. The mages sadly shook their heads at the Sleepers' folly, and the changelings impotently wept at the loss of so much Glamour. And the people — Sleepers, kine, Quick

— who had suffered and died and caused others to suffer and die: They tried to forget, reacted with outrage, told themselves “We Wouldn’t Have Done This,” and in countless other ways tried to put an end to the hell incarnate that was Auschwitz.

For the Dead it was only beginning.

Geography — Skinlands



Auschwitz-Birkenau stands to this day — at least in part, for much of the camp was razed in 1945 by an SS desperate to hide their crimes from the inexorable Russian advance. Parts of the camp were subsequently restored, and today the site houses a museum — the *Panstwowe Muzeum w Oswiecimiu* — commemorating the victims of the Holocaust.

Auschwitz

The gate, with its ARBEIT MACHT FREI motto, still welcomes visitors to the museum, as it welcomed the prisoners half a century ago. The watch towers still rear to the sky, and miles of rusting barbed wire still encircle the grounds, although the machine-guns no longer claim victims, and high-voltage current no longer crackles along the fences.

The tar-paper barracks and lanes lie silent and sepulchral in their orderly rows, though the grass grows rampant, no longer neatly pruned. On particularly calm days, it is difficult to conjure the roar of trains and trucks, barking of dogs and guards, shots, screams and wet sounds of metal and wood on skin and bone that once echoed through the camp. Even more difficult to imagine, as the tourist inhales the crisp air of a Silesian autumn, are the frightful smells that once wafted along these streets — the stench of thousands of unbathed bodies, many fallen to injury or illness, and over everything the smell of burning meat.

Here, behind the endless wire, in these barracks where so many lives came and were snuffed out, the museum’s permanent exhibits lie on display. Here in Block Four — the “Extermination” exhibit — is the Hall of Nations, displaying the flags of those countries whose citizens were shipped to their death. Here also sits a sculpted model graphically — luridly — displaying the process of a gassing, from the herding of the victims to the consigning of their corpses to the crematoria. Behind one case, a tin of Zyklon B — the pesticide gas used in the killing — lies

impotent, its cargo of lethal pellets spilling like wasp larvae from a hapless caterpillar.

Blocks Five through Seven continue the immersion process. Hills of shoes, mountains of spectacles, forests of human hair swell behind glass cases. In one exhibit hang the rags that Auschwitz prisoners were forced to wear while toiling in subzero temperatures — *sans*, of course, the swarms of lice with which such rags were invariably infested. Block Six displays the cup of soup, slab of bread and piece of sausage (approximately 1500 calories) with which each inmate was expected to fortify himself for a 19- or 20-hour day of grueling labor.

And everywhere the photos stare: grotesque tableaux depicting emaciated, naked creatures seemingly copied from an El Greco or Bosch painting. Truly it is as if some latter-day Bosch painted the denizens of Hell: whip-scarred, caked with scabs and running sores, genitals obscenely mutilated. Only the painful thinness, and the ubiquitous tattoos, remain constant.

The visitors react as they will; some weep, some stare blankly, some turn away. Few remain unmoved, particularly when the camp’s former denizens attempt to conjure all manner of poignant Phantasms, hoping for a snippet of Pathos. Kapo Ficzkla contemptibly compares this behavior to the begging of semidomesticated bears at a national park, but this does little to deter the ravenous Dead of Auschwitz.

It is perhaps in the notorious Block 11, spiderweb of the Gestapo’s atrocities, that the emotional resonances are felt most strongly. Nihil tributaries from Sheol web this area, the site of SS interrogations, executions and punishments. Here were interred the victims of the *Stehzelles* (standing cells): cubicles whose width and breadth were 90 centimeters each. Prisoners confined to the *Stehzelles* could not sit or lie down and were provided with no bathroom facilities; this last indignity soon did not matter, however, as these prisoners were neither fed nor given water.

Zum Krematorium

Altogether, seven buildings were used to carry out the Nazis’ genocide, although only four — the crematoria in Birkenau — actually conform to the stereotype of the giant industrial death factory commonly imagined by students of the Holocaust. The first and oldest crematorium/gas chamber, Number I, was located in Auschwitz itself and was considerably smaller than Kremas II-V. These enormous edifices, completed in 1943, were located at Birkenau. Additionally, two converted farmhouses (the “red” and “white” farmhouses) were used as gas chambers, but had no crematoria annexed to them. Victims murdered here were buried in mass graves or burned in open pits.



Birkenau

And Birkenau also stands, and is also open to those who wish to view the Third Reich's handiwork. It is vaster than Auschwitz, befitting its intended function as slaughter pen for all of Europe's Jews. It is a gargantuan spiderweb of wood and mud and endless, endless wire.

If the overall ambience of Auschwitz is one of stifling, miasmal oppression, Birkenau delivers a sudden knife-jab of terror. For if Auschwitz was the nexus of the prisoners' monotonous misery, then Birkenau embodies their mechanistic murder. It is in Birkenau that most of the camp's Spectres lair. It is perhaps good that their invisible presence inspires such unease, for they are strong at night, and travelers lingering alone or nocturnally at Birkenau may taste altogether too much of the Shadow-eaten's pain.

It was here, not so long ago, that the cloudless azure sky of a Polish fall was blackened by volcanic clouds of human soot belching from four elephantine smokestacks. Today the sky is once again clear, and only gaping pits remain to mark the site of the great Kremas — though visitors viewing the sites often feel as though they are being blanketed by an invisible ash.

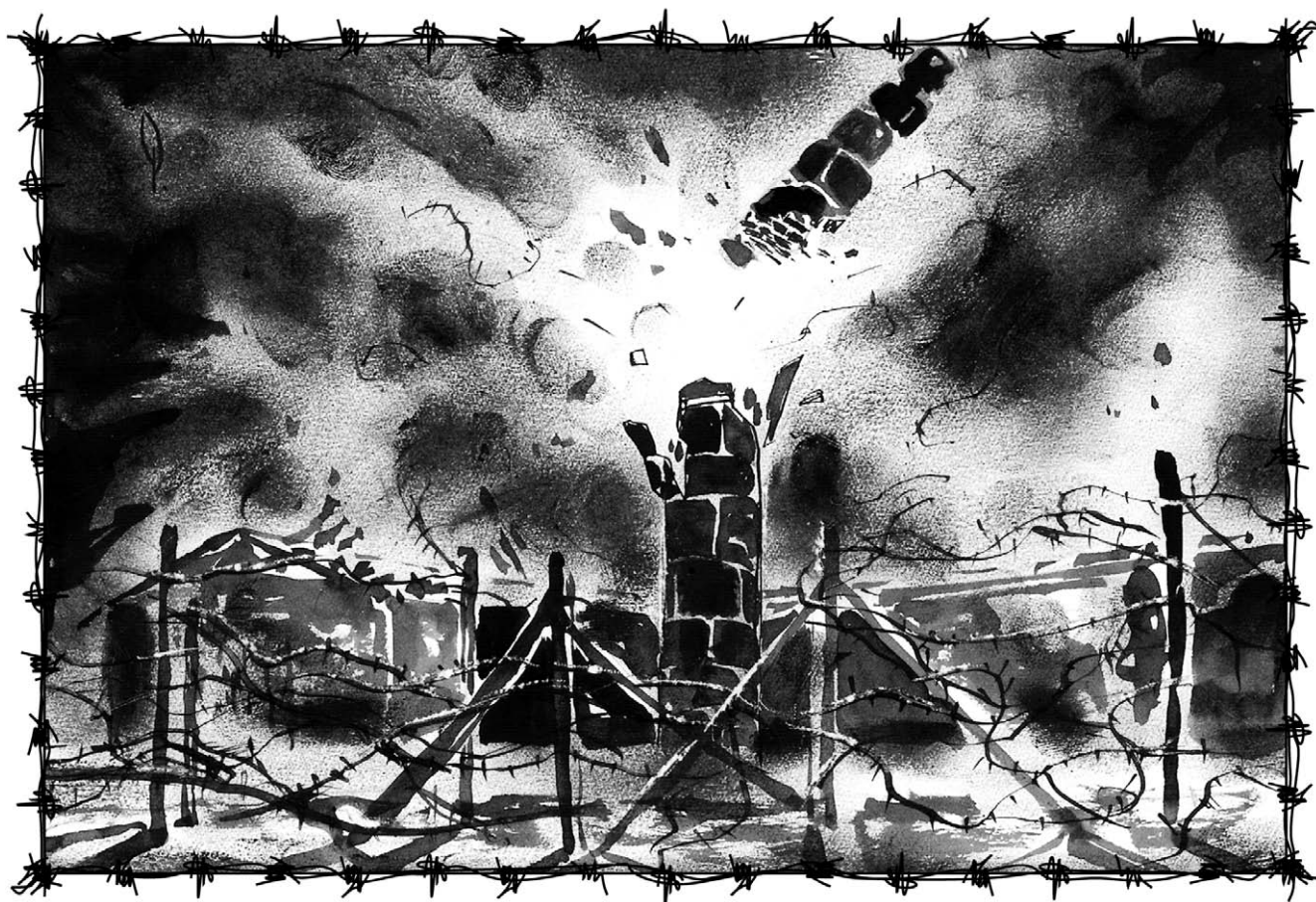
Visitors enter — as did the prisoners, not so long ago — through an edifice known as the Gate of Death. This structure served as a combination entrance and SS guardhouse.

And once inside, the visitor is treated to much the same view as a newly arrived prisoner: rows upon rows of barbed wire, signs warning against contact with the now-deactivated electrified fences, and rows of dilapidated wooden barracks. Now, of course, a silent tension replaces the roar of trucks and dogs and kapos and flames; there are no *selektions* to watch, no swarms of zebra-striped skeletons, no corpses lying in the mud.

Only a few sites are open to the public; the rest of the camp slowly falls apart, as the world hopes that time will heal even this most grievous of wounds. Far to the left lies an exhibit displaying the suffering and travails of the penal companies; while poignant in and of itself, its emotional impact is largely eclipsed by those simple holes in the earth, on which the Kremas rebuild themselves in the viewers' minds.

On the far side of the camp, visitors may view the International Monument Commemorating the Victims of Fascism. This congeries of inscribed tablets and pillars is a Pathos sink and a gathering place for the more political dybbuks. Those dybbuks whose families come to mourn hover like flies around this area; sadly, they are often driven off by more powerful dybbuks harvesting Pathos "for the good of the community."

The pond into which the ashes from Kremas IV and V were dumped still sits, and the slick whitish-gray film covering



and saturating it has not been thinned by time. Occasionally a Spectral band, empowered by visitors' revulsion at the sight of the human effluvia, uses a Dark Arcanos variant of Outrage to animate the sodden mass into an ameboid stalker. Such a manifestation is rare, however, and happens only at night.

Mussulmen

The camp has more than its share of drones, spiritual detritus from thousands of senseless deaths. These will-less shells of dybbuks are known by the name their living counterparts earned in life — *mussulmen*: persons who, mentally and emotionally overwhelmed by the conditions of their existence, retreated into a near-catatonic state. Commonly the products of advanced states of starvation, *mussulmen* simply shambled unseeing about the camp, not caring whether they bathed, were fed or were led to the gas chambers.

In the Shadowlands, *mussulmen* are usually the victims of traumas so intense that the wraiths' guiding will was irrevocably

shattered. Though the raw Pathos of their deaths still chains them to the camp, these mindless ghosts lack the sentience to do anything except repeat the circumstances leading to their demises. Most dybbuks simply let the *mussulmen* wander as they will, eternally reenacting whatever bizarre tableaux their death-traumas locked them into.

And so, every so often, a visitor to the memorial may be struck with a sudden, unnatural chill, or from the corner of the eye, glimpse something hideous yet half-seen, like the afterglow of a nightmare. More sensitive Quick have occasionally lived to regret their visits, as ghostly apparitions have conjured themselves into existence: hurling themselves on "electrified" fences, sprouting gouts of blood from ethereal bullet holes, swelling and asphyxiating on decades-evaporated Zyklon B, or blackening "alive" in the crematoria's long-quenched flames. Other visitors have been "treated" to sights of columns of ragged skeletons straggling along through the miry streets, soullessly staring ahead as one of their number drops in midstep, never to rise. Still others have clutched their ears, trying vainly to shut out the mechanis-

tic wails of long-dead mothers robotically imploring long-dead SS men not to murder equally long-dead babies.

These manifestations strengthen at night — particularly when the Spectres goad and orchestrate the *mussulmen*'s dramas — and thus the Quick can find the deserted camp a somewhat unhealthy place to explore after dark.

The Dark Kingdom of Wire

Begrüßung



Like other Necropoli, the Auschwitz-Birkenau of the Shadowlands is intangible, and any sensory data received from it are as much spiritual as physical. And so it is telling, perhaps, that the first thing the Lager's few visitors register, as they sweep across the cracked clay of Shadowlands Silesia, is the wind-borne stench — the suffocating potpourri from two million bodies' worth of singed hair, skin blasted to charcoal, rotting flesh and dysentery-tainted feces, all mixed with the singular odor of noxious fumes. The smell precedes sound, outdistances sight, and some wraithly visitors aver that the odor lingers on the Corpus for days after departing the camp, despite the best efforts one can make with Castigate and Moliate. Indeed, a few more somber members of the Restless Dead swear that the smell never quite leaves, and that the winds of Auschwitz carry a measure of Oblivion itself.

Then comes the sound: murmur-faint at first, like the whimpering of a murdered baby, occasionally amplifying into a feverish crescendo. This, too, is a *mélange*: a babel of voices sobbing, whispering, pleading, screaming, barking orders, cursing or gurgling in the death-spasm strain to make themselves heard over a cacophonous accompaniment of grinding gears, shrieking winds, hissing current and crackling flames. Over all, as if conducting the disparate sounds into a single purposeful madrigal, echoes a low, endless, oscillating groan, instinctual and animalistic, a sort of whalesong. And perhaps, of all creatures, only the whales — themselves mechanistically hounded nearly to extinction — could comprehend the intricate, mournful monotony that is the dirge of Auschwitz.

The first sight springs on the traveler suddenly, and he might almost imagine that some waif of the Tempest has spouted forth here — and perhaps, in some sense, it has. For surely the roiling ashen thing defiling the Shadowlands horizon is a Nihil or some other form of Tempestuous eruption.

But no, the grayish mass is a monstrous cloud, choking and opaque as the twin mushroom clouds that — too little too late for these wraiths! — heralded the end of the Second World War.

The cloud rises, and settles, and expands, and contracts, and occasionally extends probing pseudopodia skyward, as though the residents of the camp were trying to tap God on the foot and ask, "Why?" But it is never still. And, gazing upon this phenomenon, the wise traveler becomes aware that he is preparing to enter that problematic environmental hazard known as the Great Miasma of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Sometimes the Miasma is the industrial cyan shade of Zyklon B; other times, litten by pillars of flame from the Kremas, it glows lurid crimson. Most of the time, however, it retains the combined hues of its constituent components: endless flakes of tattooed human skin, charred flesh, ash and bone dust. And so the traveler who would come to Auschwitz must literally trudge through a blizzard of human tissue, clammy and cold as a Polish winter.

At its weakest, the Miasma hovers around the grounds like a viscous fog. It lies relatively quiescent, though travelers passing through a thick bank may be stroked by a cold ectoplasmic tendril which, though incorporeal, exudes a sense of sliminess. Occasionally clouds of the stuff will detach themselves to float against the moon or over the loop of the Sola River.

Sometimes, for no particular reason, the Miasma will coagulate, growing stronger, louder and more odoriferous. The gas will roil with streaks of other colors, and the flakes will coalesce into bas-reliefs of unpleasantly groping shapes. It is wise to seek shelter at this time.

But most of the time, the Miasma allows the visitor to pass with only minimal resistance. As the traveler nears the camp proper, shoving her way through the rain of skin and bone, tangible shapes become discernible. Four cylinders of darkness tower against the gray sky, and from their tops roar pillars of luminous radiance, briefly reminding the traveler of lighthouses seen through the fog. But the light the towers shed is the infernal scarlet of crematory flames, and despite 50 years' passage, the stink of scorched meat is still nigh unbearable.

Auschwitz


And there it is:

ARBEIT MACHT FREI.

Work will make you free.

The motto, cleverly shaped from half-molten weldings of animate slag, emblazons the moaning sky. Illuminated by the





glow from the crematory pyres, it warns, or beckons, from a gunmetal gate that seems almost liquescent, like lava crystallized in midflight. And there, eternally fused to the gate, the half-formed, weeping faces stare impotently, just as they did at the war-crimes trials. Höss is there, yes, and Moll, and the Axe Queen of Budy, and others less notorious but just as brutal. Still others — Mengele, Mussfeld, Grabner — have thus far escaped the vengeance of the Camp of the Dead.

Work will make you free. That motto was a mantra for Auschwitz's architect and orchestrator, Kommandant Rudolph Höss — the mission statement behind every one of the camp's two million murders — and so, the inhabitants reason, it is only fitting that Höss's molten, soulforged Corpus be used physically to inscribe the message that so inspired him in life.

In all directions stretch plains of cracked yellow rock. Here and there a rock or plot stands in sharper focus: perhaps the last boulder inadvertently dropped by an exhausted laborer who for that transgression subsequently fell under the kapos' truncheons; perhaps the last stone trod upon by a desperately fleeing escapee as a barrage of machine-gun fire tore him to pieces; even, perhaps, the ground where a "parachutist" broke open his head after a two-story swan dive for the sport of the SS.

And everywhere, there is wire. It coils in and out of the fog, sprouting like kudzu over the endless rows of tar-paper barracks, twisting and groping in every direction and from the gate to the horizon.

For in the Shadowlands, Auschwitz-Birkenau has burst its original boundaries, as the putrid core of a rotten fruit will rupture its rind. If the original camp was by far the largest KZ, in the Shadowlands it has become a virtual city. Mazes of wire and mausoleums of bile-green tar-paper weave and wind in serpentine parodies of streets. Signs proclaiming "*Halt-stoj*" shine in the phosphorescent glare of crackling fences.

The camp streets proper are a morass of mud and human flakes, constantly seething and roiling. At times a half-formed caricature attempts to detach itself from the stew: a *mussulman* drone mindlessly struggling to get up from the ground that became its enervated living counterpart's deathbed. Occasionally, the muck itself will groan from a spontaneously extruded face, or grope at passersby's Corpora with pseudopodlike hands.

Boundaries

Brutally utilitarian in life, the wire fences of Auschwitz beyond the Shroud are clever constructs indeed, even by the exacting standards of Stygia's Artificers. More than one visiting wraith skilled in the art of forging has expressed amazement at

Deathsight

Deathsight in most areas of the Shadowlands is not a pleasant thing. Deathsight in Auschwitz is much, much worse. Virtually every square inch of the Auschwitz complex bore witness to death either violent or accidental, and to the suffering of thousands of other victims left alive for the nonce. Rotting mildew — the spiritual residue of two million victims' worth of blood, brain tissue, skin, diarrhea and other forms of excrement — encrusts the block floors and walls. Attempts at cleaning the stuff prove as futile in death as they did in life — and so the barracks resident literally trudges through a human stew of sorts. Few dybbuks can spare the necessary energy even to clean themselves, and so most of the camp's residents spend a good portion of their afterlives caked in filth.

Entire quarters of the Lager, particularly in Spectre-haunted Birkenau, bear blatant taint of Oblivion: walls turned to sticky green cytoplasm, Tempest-borne spores sprouting all manner of unhealthy Phantasies, and the like. Most dybbuks must share their barracks with Phantasmal vermin, counterparts to the rats and lice with which they coexisted in life. Occasionally an entire barracks will vanish, swallowed with its inhabitants into the Tempest. Sometimes the unfortunate barracks never returns; sometimes, less pleasantly, it reappears nights or weeks or years later.

the ubiquitous growth that winds mazelike through the camp, twisting here and there and everywhere in crazy patterns — the filaments of expertly braided and stranded soul-stuff, spidersilk-thin and diamond-hard; the razored edges and serrated spikes, which occasionally drip with a viscous pus; and, most frighteningly, the lethal current visibly crackling in ultraviolet waves down the fences, one jolt of which is 10 times enough to send the sturdiest wraith howling down into the Labyrinth. When queried, the KZ's taciturn kommandos mutter of "channeling soulfire," though no Artificer among the Restless Dead, not even Ember himself, is aware of such a process. Nor do the baleful energies sparking from the wires resemble any soulfire known to Stygia's craftspersons.

Equally disconcerting is the fact that, in Auschwitz, the barbed wire seems to be endowed with a peculiar animate

quality. No dybbuk has ever seen the stuff writhe and twist, *per se*, but certainly Auschwitz's residents, upon arising from Slumber, have been shocked to find kudzulike growths of razored, spiked darksteel caking entire barracks where the evening before there had been nothing. Indeed, some wraiths, awed by Auschwitz's sheer size, have proposing renaming it the Dark Kingdom of Wire.

Needless to say, Auschwitz's wire is unforgivingly sharp; most dybbuks bear Corporal scars from accidental contact, and a few unlucky wraiths have been blasted straight to Oblivion through stumbling into the deadly vines. Nonetheless, Auschwitz wraiths often "harvest" this "raw material," weaving it into all manner of vestments, whips and other utensils; this extremely dangerous art is practiced by only a few dybbuks, and they are valued for their skills.

The Blocks

To the horizon they stretch: endless rows of tin and wood and green tar-paper. Dilapidated, cramped, and in many cases half-eaten by Oblivion, the blocks where Auschwitz's residents suffered in life are the sites they call home in death.

Despite the barracks' repulsiveness, triangles and kommandos battle incessantly over these Haunts. Auschwitz-Birkenau is an unhealthy place even for the Dead, and those who lack the friends,

strength or cunning to force themselves into a barracks are fair prey for Spectres, Maelstroms or eruptions of the Miasma.

Nevertheless, there are certain areas of the Lager where sane wraiths do not go. The Puff is at best problematic, while the "neighborhoods" around Blocks 10 and 11, Konigsgraben, and any of the subdivisions near Sheol are frankly unsafe for those Dead not in service to Oblivion. Chilling howls and worse noises can be heard from behind the barbed wire at night, and incautious dybbuks wandering here after dark often vanish outright.

Sheol

Auschwitz-Birkenau was a tremendously complex structure, a Chinese box of horrors, and so it is difficult to point to a "hub" or "center" of its evil. Was it Höss? Himmler? The Kremas? Block 11? The *selektions*? There are as many theories as there are experts.

In the Shadowlands, however, Auschwitz-Birkenau has a very clearly defined nexus: that enormous Nihil which swallowed the SS barracks at Birkenau in 1945, and which the dybbuks fearfully refer to as Sheol.

If other Nihilis are rifts in the fabric of reality, Sheol is a gaping Mariana Trench spiraling down into what surely must





be the Void itself. Its bottom cannot be seen, though muttering, wailing and singing perpetually waft from the depths, and Sheol is the jumping-off point of most Spectral incursions.

Though the “eye” of Sheol is more or less centered on the SS barracks, cracks and tributaries of nothingness periodically wind through the camp, like the questing tentacles of a squid.

Most of the time the Nihil lies relatively quiescent, rippling, dilating and contracting in disturbing but harmless pulses. But all dybbuks fear the random but inevitable “eruptions” when Sheol’s center swells like a vast black tsunami, and a frightful collective scream rises from the depths. At these times, Sheol vomits forth swarms of Spectres, and neither the Quick nor the Dead are safe.

Dybbuk triangles take turns guarding Sheol; this duty, though dreaded, is taken with utmost seriousness by all dybbuks, regardless of kommando. Such vigilance has cost the camp heavy losses — and then, too, many dybbuks have hurled themselves headlong into the abyss, claiming to hear the voices of parents, children, wives and husbands beckoning from the other side.

The Kremas



Auschwitz is, of course, most famous for its crematoria. Blasted from earthly existence, these structures were immediately hurled intact into the Shadowlands. These minarets to Oblivion tower to the heavens still, jutting above the enshrouding Miasma. Soulfire roars from their chimneys day and night, illuminating the entire Lager in a reddish haze.

The Kremas, though hated and dreaded in equal measure, are vital components of the camp’s economy. Here, in these infernos, legions of monstrous dybbuks toil, soulforging Corpora and wire into needed goods for use or barter. Never is the vicinity free from the blast of the ovens, the roar of the flames and the screams of the molten.

This is true even at night, though all dybbuks are careful to clear out of the Kremas by sundown. After dark, the chimneys spew flames of a sickly, phosphorescent blue — the same color as the walls of the gas chambers — and unfortunate passersby try desperately to shut their ears against the noises drifting from inside. No sane dybbuk wants to know what happens behind the Krema doors after sunset; explorers never return.



The Gas Chambers

In the Shadowlands, one can also find the death chambers themselves: Nihil-ridden, blue-stained rooms through which dybbuks are loath to tread. Oblivion radiates from these rooms in waves as noxious and tangible as Zyklon B, and despite being Fettered here, most dybbuks prefer to leave these abhorrent sites to the night and the Spectres.

These sites are veritable Pathos banquets, but the emotions obtained here are dark indeed, and most dybbuks view the “drinking” of such Pathos as revolting and blasphemous. But neither the censure of their fellows nor the darksteel chains barring entrance to the “blue rooms” stop certain weaker dybbuks deprived of needed spiritual energy by their ravenous brethren. These dybbuks, urged on by whispers from deep within their Corpora — or perhaps from within the Nihil-cracks fracturing the “blue room” walls — sneak into the death chambers as evening falls, indulging in gluttonous feasts of lurid trauma.

Certain particularly careless feeders find themselves still within the death chambers as darkness falls...and their fate is often ghastly indeed, even by the standards of Auschwitz.

The Puff (The House of Dolls)

Carnage and carnality often go hand in hand, and so even the Camp of the Dead had its brothel. Staffed by the absolute lowest caliber of prostitutes, the brothel was offered as a reward for good behavior; the SS enjoyed the idea of the camp’s emaciated scarecrows rutting themselves that much quicker into the grave. The whores also serviced the SS (rape of prisoners by the SS was harshly punished — not out of concern for the women’s sensibilities, but rather because the moralists of the SS found it revolting that sons of the Reich would defile themselves with subhuman sluts).

The Dead remember many things, and so the Puff still stands in the Shadowlands. Fueled by copious quantities of Pathos procured from their services, the residents of this place have turned the brothel into a den of opulent, if somewhat garish, majesty. Red lanterns made from the Corporal skins of deadbeat johns grace the exterior, illuminating barbed-wire sculptures depicting various prurient acts.

Inside, the House of Dolls is bordello, nightclub and cabaret. The main area features a stage on which a variety of entertainments are performed nightly, from obscene Phantasms of Wagner operas to bizarre tableaux involving “captive” Spectres and SS *Waffengeisten*. From this main area, several doorways and tunnels lead clients into private subterranean alcoves, and most emotion-starved dybbuks venturing there do not register their

descent into the Labyrinth until it is too late. It is rumored that, depending on the whim of the lady and the client, a visit to the Puff can be ecstatic or a Harrowing-level nightmare.

Despite its dubious reputation and clientele, the Puff is often the only answer for those dybbuks too weak to assert their rights to Auschwitz’s communal Pathos. All comers are serviced, though those who cannot pay in Relics or Pathos must sign their names in the madam’s debt book, and the fate of those whose tabs run too high is perhaps best left a mystery.

The madam of this establishment is one Cecile Gildeau: a French Jew, a prostitute and a victim of the 1942 Budy Massacre. Gildeau is a past master of Usury, Moliate and Phantasm. She is also an expert at reassuring nervous first-timers who might otherwise be put off by the weird entertainment, or by the fact that Gildeau’s head, hacked off by Budy’s notorious Axe Queen, whispers seductively from its resting place under the crook of her left arm. Her Corpus is lush and exaggeratedly feminine, dressed in diaphanous lingerie. This diverts viewers’ eyes from the ragged stump of her neck and the fact that Cecile’s severed head is an elaborately rouged and made-up, but still fleshless, skull. She and Steuben, while not friends exactly, have reached an understanding, and he operates his business from the House of Dolls’ bar.

Konigsgraben (King’s Ditch)

This murky canal winds its way through Shadowlands Birkenau, suffused with the Pathos of legions of penal work gangs who expired during its construction. Healthy dybbuks don’t go anywhere near Konigsgraben’s waters, as the entire area is haunted by Spectres.


Unfortunately, Konigsgraben occasionally comes to the dybbuks; during Maelstroms and Sheol’s upheavals, the canal often heaves itself bodily from its banks, twisting and writhing like a great watery python. Shrieking Shades and Mortwights ride the flume, abandoning themselves to Konigsgraben’s torrent even as they empower it. Entire barracks have been lost, as the animate flood crashes on them like a fist (accompanied by Spectral shrieks of “Time to go to the showers, lads!”) and sucks them into the Tempest.

Auschwitz III (Buna-Monowitz)

The factory camp of Buna is firmly in the hands of the Collective. It is here that Auschwitz’s Artificers forge much of their steel and their wire, and it is here that captive Nazi wraiths or Spectres are brought to be slagged for darksteel.

Buna is several kilometers from Auschwitz-Birkenau proper, and while this distances it from the worst of Sheol’s





eruptions, it also means that dybbuks here must often fend for themselves. This they have done with commendable skill, erecting barbed-wire barricades and relic walls from shrapnel bombed into the Shadowlands by Allied air strikes.

The great factory itself is an edifice out of a Fritz Lang movie: an enormous enclosed structure bristling with pipes, gears, weaponry and bizarre engines. Through its clanking corridors and tunnels scurry the industrious dybbuks of the Collective, performing their tasks with antlike precision.

Unlike its sister camps, Buna has a definite leader: Stefan Brukovich, an old concentrationary and Communist who survived 10 years in various camps only to be shot by the SS in the days before the evacuations. The crusty old dybbuk is a political master and shrewd bargainer, having been a union agitator before the war. Under his leadership, Buna's dybbuks have gained ample access to the Pathos wellsprings of the two more famous camps.

Over the years, the dybbuks of Buna have shut themselves off from the teeming throngs of their sister camps. Increasingly isolationist and distrustful of the corruption creeping its way through Auschwitz and Birkenau, Buna dybbuks keep to themselves and their work.

The Forges

The greatest "forges" are the Birkenau Kremas themselves. Dybbuks who work here turn gray rather than black, their Corpora encrusted with bone dust and skin flakes. These forges are insufficiently hot to forge darksteel, but are useful in shaping wire, and are of invaluable aid in Molation and soulforging (all difficulties to "work" with a wraith who has been immersed in a Krema oven are reduced by one). Needless to say, such a process is hideously painful. Needless to say, when it comes to working with the Corpora of captured Nazis, Auschwitz's dybbuks wouldn't have it any other way.

The Shadowlands factory of Buna also has its forges, which clank day and night. These relics of industrial engines are hot enough to permit the creation of darksteel, and so the dybbuks of the Collective ceaselessly churn out darksteel goods forged from the Corpora of captured Nazis. Obviously, such material is scarce, especially after all these years (though the Buna dybbuks are quite inventive in making their "material" last for decades); accordingly, Buna has "contracted" several green and black triangles to "organize" raw materials for them...and the dybbuks of Buna ask very few questions regarding the source of their contractors' soul-fodder.

The Subcamps

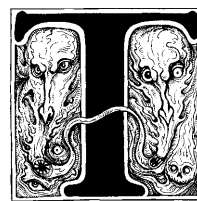
The entire Auschwitz network encompassed nearly a score of subcamps — smaller blocks of prisoners living, working and

dying some distance from the main camp. In the Shadowlands, most of the subcamps were methodically cut off and devoured by spectral hordes long ago, which only fuels Buna's paranoia. A few of these camps still house scattered triangles of eccentric dybbuks; how these enclaves survive in the midst of the Spectre-haunted wastes is a mystery to the dybbuks of the main camp, who view such outsiders with great suspicion.

Society

It was a world unto itself, a state within a state, a society without law. Men were flung into it to fight for their naked lives, for mere survival.

— Publisher's introduction to Eugen Kogol's *The Theory and Practice of Hell*



The term "society" is at best a polite euphemism here. Just as there is nothing one can realistically term "society" in a swarm of flies, though they all buzz around the same piece of compost, so the dybbuks of Auschwitz eschew any sort of concrete system of government.

There is no Hierarchy here: no *Führer* to beguile the masses and bark commands. After all, who could presume to run Auschwitz? Certainly not those who ran it in life; the vengeful Dead would hardly suffer the kapos to torment them anew. The SS? Those few who were not immediately blasted into Oblivion were hunted down and either tortured and slagged or shaped into *Waffengeisten*. And Höss? Well, the former Kommandant can hardly be expected to dictate policy from the slag-gate to which he has been welded, half-molten and shrieking, for all eternity.

No one has ever bothered to conduct a census of dybbuks. It is rumored that the one time this notion was suggested, Roza Robota replied sarcastically, "What — would you have us line up for roll call, mein Herr?" Best estimates indicate at least 200,000 inhabitants. It is a staggering number, but Auschwitz was if nothing else fertile soil for Restless Dead.

Auschwitz's Dead refer to themselves simply as dybbuks or *geists*; the distinction between wraith and Spectre is at best blurred ("What — would you have us wear triangles or armbands, mein Herr?"). Nonetheless, certain dybbuks feel common bonds of kinship or profession — or, more likely, feel the need to band together to protect themselves from their ravenous comrades. Auschwitz' residents refer to these bands as "triangles" or "kommandos," in mockery of the Nazis' institutions.

Triangles of one sort or another fulfill all of Auschwitz' cultural and social niches, acting as guilds, circles and sects. Many triangles, particularly those with political or religious bents, strive to better their members and (in rare instances) the Lager as a whole. Less savory are the triangles composed primarily of greens and blacks; these wraiths, continuing the practices of their mortal existences, often act as gangs of thugs and extortionists.

And so in death, as in life, a dybbuk is identified by a bewildering array of symbols. Whether one is red or green, Polish or Yugoslavian, kapo or victim, can mean the difference between sustenance and starvation, power and victimization. Those triangles that are strong, important or cunning enough to enforce their claims to housing, Relics and Pathos survive and prosper — albeit marginally. It is best not to dwell on the fate of the others....

Some triangles — such as the Dayan, a minyan of Jewish Kabbalists skilled in Lifeweb and Fatalism — are groups of dybbuks bound together by common interest and mutual cooperation. As the threat of spectral incursion increases, however, many dybbuks allow themselves to become vassals to a strong leader — a kapo, if you will — in exchange for protection and secure housing. Alas, many kapos retain their characteristic brutality on this side of the Shroud, and thus the lot of servile dybbuks is little better in death.

An exhaustive listing of all the triangles in Auschwitz would be an exercise in futility; a few of the most important divisions follow.

Deathmarks

The Nazis were nothing if not meticulous in the categorization of their enemies, and so the Corpora of Auschwitz's dybbuks display a bizarre hierarchy of deathmarks. Even in death, most dybbuks still bear the dehumanizing numbers inscribed on their arms (or other appendages), and many Corpora display the colored triangles imposed on them by their captors. (Indeed, certain Kabbalists skilled in the use of Fatalism perform numerological analyses on the tattoos of willing dybbuks.)

But there is more, for the dybbuks of Auschwitz are a far cry from the peaceful Dead of most Necropoli. The horror of their deaths has left indelible marks on their Corpora. Many of these deformities are so grotesque that Auschwitz's inhabitants are mistaken for Nephwracks — and perhaps this judgment is not so far off the mark.

Over these deliberate marks crisscross scars from floggings (25 lashes on the naked buttocks being the standard punishment for wrongdoing at Auschwitz), riding crops, truncheons, and other poorly healed injuries, so that many dybbuks are virtual Frankenstein monsters of suppurating scabs.





The spiritual unhealth of their surroundings also takes its toll on dybbuks' Corpora. Most bear palpable marks of Oblivion: byproducts of being caught in the open during Maelstroms, stumbling into the camp fences, or simply one Harrowing after another. Worse yet, dybbuks forced to live in the filthier blocks often become infested with Phantasmal parasites: swarms of spiritual vermin similar to the lice they hosted as Quick.

And many dybbuks, wracked in life by bizarre diseases nearly unknown in the 20th century, bear their stigmata in death. Some dybbuks bear the marks of noma, a "dry gangrene of the face" producing ulcers that corroded gaping holes in its victims' cheeks. Others display Corporal epidermises that even 50 years later peel like paint, testament to the phemphicus that laid them low.

The Reds

Those political activists passionate enough to go to a Nazi camp for their beliefs often maintain their fervor beyond the

Shroud. Their specific areas of concern do tend to change; after all, being machine-gunned, gassed or beaten to death tends to render concerns over the welfare of the proletariat somewhat irrelevant.

Most politicals have organized themselves into one of two triangles. The *Partja*, based in Auschwitz proper, seeks to impose some sort of stability on the madness that is Auschwitz. Its sometimes ally, sometimes rival is the Collective, a triangle of Buna-based wraiths who center their activities around production of goods and equal distribution of Relics.

The Partja (The Bund)

The Auschwitz-based *Partja* comprises those reds who still believe in some manner of social justice — at least for sympathizers to their Socialist-based agenda. The *Partja* seeks an end to the anarchic system of rapacious triangles, the institution of mandatory labor, and the distribution of Relics and goods to all. They despise the greens and blacks, but are occasionally forced into alliance with some of the less noxious kommandos... particularly when the Spectres burble up from Sheol.



The Collective

The Collective harkens back to the days of the old Communists and the labor parties. Less interested in lofty rhetoric and more concerned with practical gains for its “workers,” the Collective can back up its stance by its virtual monopoly over the production of darksteel goods. Certain dybbuks distrustful of the Collective call it a cabal of opportunists who sell to dybbuk and Spectre alike. When accused of this, the Collective’s taciturn representatives merely grunt and shrug.

The Greens

One would hope that internment in a death camp, a violent end, and 50 years of purgatory in a monstrous afterworld would reform even the most vicious criminal. Alas, such does not seem to be the case.

Many of Auschwitz’s green triangles were made kapos; those who were not often brutalized their fellows anyway, or tricked or bullied others out of life-sustaining rations or goods for their own betterment. Accordingly, upon death they were forced to band together, lest they join Höss and the other prisoners of the slag-gate.

Die Eingesten

Die Eingesten is a gang of former kapos, brutal opportunists all. These wraiths avoided the vengeance of their fellow Dead by dint of being “fortunate” enough to be machine-gunned as a group. Crossing the Shroud at the same time, the ex-kapos proved tough enough to fend off the assaults of their former victims, who eventually found more pressing concerns to occupy themselves. Now *Die Eingesten* occupies a Relic barracks on the periphery of the camp, venturing into “town” only long enough to bully needed Pathos or Artifacts from weaker dybbuks.

The members of *Die Eingesten* are some of the toughest dybbuks around, and to their credit are generally at the wire when the Spectres howl up from the deeps. Due to an accord signed with Kapo Ficzk in 1948, *Die Eingesten* agreed to serve as conscripted militia in exchanged for not being hurled bodily into Sheol. The kapos grudgingly uphold their end of the bargain.

Kanada

Named after (and basing itself out of) the collection of storehouses where the plunder of Europe’s Jews was kept, *Kanada* is a green triangle devoted to the collection and distribution of Relics. Through a combination of guile and force, *Kanada* acts as a brokerage service and pawnshop for relics, Artifacts and other goods.

Kanada also serves a darker function. While the dybbuks of Auschwitz would prefer to craft their goods exclusively from Nazi wraiths and *Mussulmen*, there are only so many to go around. It is not unknown for *Kanada* to snatch wraiths from the Polish countryside, or even fellow dybbuks from the camp, and barter them to the forges as “captured marauders.” The forge-dybbuks adopt a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy toward this sort of currency, and so some of Auschwitz’s denizens end their afterlives as they ended their lives — as victims.

The Sonderkommandos

The 13 Sonderkommandos lived and worked as groups, and a disproportionate number of them ended up as Restless Dead — guilt-ridden from their service to the Nazis, not quite evil enough to go to Sheol. So, in death, they haunt their barracks as groups, and most work in the Birkenau Kremas by day (to work by night would be suicide). Most Sonderkommandos were Jews of no particular color, but their opportunism has rendered them disagreeable to other dybbuks, and they are considered green.

A noted exception is the 12th Sonderkommando, the heroes who revolted against the Nazis and blew up Krema IV. They are treated reverentially, and their leader, Kapo Shlomo Ficzk is as close to a camp leader as Auschwitz-Birkenau is likely to find.

The Blacks: Die Scheissgeisten


The wearers of the black triangle tended to survive by obsequiousness and acquiescence to their Nazi captors; and so in death they bear the epithet *Die Scheissgeisten* — the “Shit-Ghosts” — with fair humor. Bottom-feeders in life, they firmly root their way into the Shadowlands muck, serving as go-betweens, smugglers, gigolos and Pathos pimps. Some, Doll Boys in life, master Usury so that they might metaphysically continue their profession in death. Some dybbuks aver that a fecal stench indeed surrounds these wraiths, though others scoff at this conjecture, pointing out that the entire camp and everything in it is an affront to deathsmell anyway.

Still, it is foolish to underestimate the influence of *Die Scheissgeisten*. From their base in the barracks bordering Birkenau, the Shit-Ghosts are often the first to hear of rumors or Spectral incursions. Rumors of Spectre worship among the *Scheissgeisten* are generally dismissed. After all, the reds maintain, a Malfean would have no need for such pathetic lackeys.

Striplings

It happened in the second half of October 1944... The children had noticed the smoke from the chimney and they realized that they





we were being led to their death. They began running hither and thither in the yard, in a dead fright, clutching their heads in despair...

— written testimony of a Sonderkommando prisoner

Auschwitz operated by many rules, and one of the most ironclad was that only those who could work were permitted to survive for any length of time. As a general rule, *selektion* proved fatal for those internees under the age of 14; most of these were immediately disposed of in the gas chambers.

Babies, in particular, proved highly diverting for the jaded soldiers of the Waffen SS, many of whom amused themselves by tossing “Jewish lice” into the air and impaling them on bayonets; hurling them into the camp’s electrified fences and watching them sizzle; or, eschewing subtlety or accuracy, simply tearing infants in two before horrified mothers’ eyes.

Those children who did make it into the camp would probably have been better off dead. Orphaned children who fell into the clutches of the black triangles often became “Doll Boys” forced to service entire barracks. Some children were left outside in midwinter to freeze to death; others suffered the opposite but even crueler fate of being doused with gasoline and burned alive.

It is no surprise, then, that Auschwitz suffers from unnaturally high concentrations of those Spectral children known as Striplings. Rare is the night that swarms of Striplings do not screech down the Lager’s streets and whirl around the Krema towers, hysterically mocking the instruments that sent them across the Shroud.

Others

The Pinks

All too many of Auschwitz’s dybbuks maintain their ‘40s moral stance toward the camp’s brutalized homosexuals — somewhat ludicrous, given that these Dead are now quite incapable of performing the activities that their counterparts found offensive in life. These sad, stoic wraiths band and live together, often in the dangerous blocks near the Kremas. They readily assist in all manner of public works, labor and military activities, but are shunned nonetheless. Lurid tales of “Corporal buggery” in conjunction with obscene rites to the Malfeans, while absurd, have their adherents among the more puritanical Dead.

Of late, however, certain pink triangles have been grudgingly accepted into Auschwitz’s quasisociety by dint of their impressive and much-needed skills. These pink dybbuks, realizing the Lager’s desperate need for ghosts proficient in trades and Arcanoi of all sorts, have taken it upon themselves to master

various crafts. Some of these triangles have reached levels of excellence nearly rivaling those of Stygian Guildwraiths, and such triangles collectively constitute an increasingly powerful faction in Auschwitz’s “politics.”

The Gypsies

The remnants of the Gypsy camp prefer to roam outside the wire, but when danger threatens they retreat to a fortified enclave within Birkenau. They contract themselves out for various projects that need doing, and perform their tasks admirably. Still, like the pinks, they are distrusted, and rumors of Spectral corruption among the Gypsies sporadically drift through the camp.

Some Gypsy wraiths also serve as messengers, trading news of life beyond the wire in exchange for needed goods and relics. While such services make the Gypsies a necessary evil in Auschwitz’s eyes, the frequency of their sojourns beyond the walls only fuels the incessant tales of Spectral compromise.

The Purples: Jehovah’s Witnesses

A few “Bible Worms” still haunt the barracks where they died. These characteristically gentle ghosts keep to themselves, practice a Far Shores-based worship that would probably damn them as Heretics outside the wire, and are among the voices supporting the lone Carmelite monastery on Auschwitz’s grounds.

A few Jehovah’s Witnesses have taken it upon themselves to become Pardoners for all seeking absolution — much to the dismay of those Jewish dybbuks who still maintain their faith beyond the Shroud. Certain Jews see the presence of the Witnesses as a divisive element, and tensions between the two sects swell nightly.

The Outsiders

Auschwitz was, at its heart, a prison — and, here as in most prisons, it is not good to do one’s time alone. This applies even across the Shroud; loners are prime targets for Spectres or their ravenous fellows, and it is far too easy for an unaffiliated dybbuk to be snatched up by a black or green kommando and sold to the forges in exchange for relics or Artifacts.

Nonetheless, there are some alienated Dead who prefer to walk alone. Other Restless fear and distrust these outsiders, branding them spectral conspirators or even Nazi Doppelgangers. They must often live in the “DMZ” neighborhoods near Sheol or take up residence outside the wire, in the Spectre-plagued subcamps.

Merits and Flaws

Tainted Humors (3 point Flaw)



Perhaps you were one of the guinea pigs honored for selection in the Reich's medical experiments; perhaps you reacted especially poorly to lungfuls of Zyklon B, or perhaps you simply lingered for weeks as typhus and dysentery corroded you from the inside out. In any case, the artificial or "natural" introduction of some contaminant into your body so shocked your system that it continues even after death.

Whenever you gain Pathos by any method whatsoever, you must immediately make a Willpower roll (difficulty 5). Failure immediately "taints" half the Pathos and transforms it into Angst, as your Corpus physiologically "poisons" the sustaining emotions. A botch converts all the ingested Pathos to Angst.

Starving (4 point Flaw)

In life, you adapted poorly to the KZs' characteristic malnutrition, so that even in death you project the image of a starving

skeleton. You have eight Corpus Levels rather than the traditional 10 (even in death you are an emaciated wreck). Furthermore, once you come upon a source of Pathos, you must make a Willpower roll (Difficulty 8) to tear yourself away. If you fail, you will simply attempt to suck up as much Pathos as possible to the exclusion of all else. After all, you don't know when you'll next be fed.

Die Waffengeisten

Emulating the barghest packs of Stygia, Auschwitz's dybbuks have constructed their own ghostly watchdogs, Moliating them from those kapos and SS soldiers deemed not wicked enough to be punished more fully. These creatures, dubbed *Die Waffengeisten*, are viewed as beings in a sort of purgatory. Perhaps with time and forgetfulness their victims-turned-masters will relent and restore them to their original shapes — but probably not.

Those dybbuks of higher ideals treat *Waffengeisten* coldly but humanely, refusing to exact vengeance for the crimes they suffered in life. Criminals and the vengeful, on the other hand, often brutalize their *Waffengeisten*, Moliating obscene graffiti on them, endowing them with grotesquely swollen genitalia and mandrillesque buttocks, changing their faces to those of swine, rats and lice (common epithets hurled by the guards), and otherwise humiliating and torturing their watchdogs. In any event, the afterlife of a *Waffengeist* is far from pleasant;

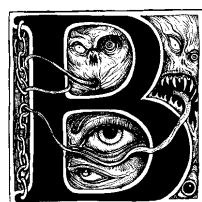


their masters provide them with barely enough Pathos to exist, ensuring both perpetual savagery and alertness.

Die Waffengeisten, unlike barghests, are fully sentient, but vengeful dybbuks prefer to handle them with muzzled leashes fashioned from barbed wire or bits of skin flayed from the Corpora of high-ranking SS wraiths.

Dybbuks

SS Obersturmführer Bauer,
"Kommandant" of *Die Waffengeisten*



Background: He was only following orders. Never particularly cruel to prisoners, Bauer nonetheless displayed no particular pity or mercy toward the *Untermenschen* he was ordered to guard and herd and kill. He killed no more and no fewer than would earn him his extra cigarettes and vodka, and so when he went down under Soviet fire in the final days and was dragged pleading before the tribunal of those he had helped murder, the dybbuks delivered this verdict:

You have proved to our satisfaction that your role in the universe is to be a mindless lackey; so be it. You have shown great aptitude at hunting and snapping at the heels of your fellows; so be it. You have demonstrated a slavish devotion to those in power, and this you would do well to remember.

And so they took him to Buna, and amid the great ovens of the dead he was melted and bent and reworked. The team of Artificers and Masquers inflicted no more pain than they had to...and no less. Now Bauer leads the *Waffengeisten* in the absence of his dybbuk masters, following orders with what seems to be a measure of contentment.

Image: Bauer attempts to carry himself with dignity, which only imbues him with an even greater measure of tragedy. His nose and jaw have been replaced by a tusked, porcine snout, and a squealing rat's head and forequarters hiss and writhe between his hindlegs in place of genitals. A pig's tail swishes over his naked buttocks, which have been Moliated with a swastika. In painful juxtaposition, his eyes are beautiful and impossibly blue. About his neck is a collar fashioned from Auschwitz's ubiquitous barbed wire.

Roleplaying Notes: The Dead of Auschwitz are your new masters now. Secretly you hope for redemption and bodily restoration, but deep down you don't expect either. Snarl suspiciously at any visitors to the camp — you've put down your share of Spectres.

Shlomo Ficzk —
Work Boss of the 12th Sonderkommando

Background: No one in the 12th Sonderkommando knew much about the kapo Ficzk; he held himself somewhat apart. He was Hungarian — that they could tell from his name — and a criminal and Jew — that they could tell from his badge. Amid the forges of the dead, Ficzk worked maniacally, a tireless ghoul. His strength was legend; he could lift a man-sized corpse under each arm and hurl it unassisted into the flames. He was cold and unyielding as marble, and, though not *exactly* a sadist, he would not hesitate to punish any who defied him.

Ficzk never spoke much, and so when members of the camp underground tentatively approached him concerning a revolt of the Sonder men, he merely grunted his assent. Guns and grenades were distributed among the partisans, and Ficzk listened in sleepy-eyed amusement to the politicals' inspired rants. Something, he knew, would go wrong.

Indeed, many things were to go wrong on October 7, 1944. The revolt in Krema IV started earlier than was planned, triggered by SS suspicion and Sonder panic. The men of Krema II, hearing explosions and shots but realizing the escape was not





due to start for hours, gathered around Ficzk. What was going on? What had they not been told? Who had betrayed them?

Their huddle was cut short by the arrival of an SS guard, who began questioning Ficzk sharply. The guard was not so easily cowed as were the Sonder men; disliking Ficzk's replies, the SS man smashed his cane over the kapo's head, with sufficient force to shatter a lesser man's skull. Ficzk only grinned from a face turned to bloody smear, then whipped out a hidden shiv and rammed it into the SS man's chest. Grasping the gurgling Nazi, Ficzk hurled him bodily and still living into the flames.

Another guard rounded the corner in time to see a pair of booted feet disappear into the oven. This was the last thing he saw before Ficzk's gnarled fist brought him to his knees. Ficzk lifted the SS man under one arm, as he would a recalcitrant poodle. He heaved the SS man in the oven, as he had heaved so many other corpses, and only a couple of onlookers saw him roughly slap the guard on the way in — a resuscitative gesture, so that the guard would go into the flames fully conscious.

Then the real fighting started, with the grenades and the dogs and always the wire. Ficzk got his people through that wire, and all the way to Raisko, but to no avail. The escape attempt was flawed from the start, of course — another example

of poor planning on the political's part — and Ficzk took seven bullets during the recapture operation.

Ficzk came over in the fall of '44, when Spectres were howling about the camp like hyenas. The dybbuks were in need of strong soldiers, and Ficzk was more than happy to fight. He met the two guards he had burned alive — now Mortwights — and sent them down again, this time to Oblivion. Dybbuks flocked to him, and Spectres scattered before him like tattered rags.

Now Ficzk leads the collected Sonderkommandos, having long since sent any rivals to Sheol. He was of the green triangle, and while he maintains few relations as such with the criminal triangles, his strength and brutality have ensured their cooperation, or at least noninterference.

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Curmudgeon

Triangle: 12th Sonderkommando

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 2

Skills: Leadership 3, Melee 4, Soulforging 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Linguistics 1, Medicine 1, Politics 1

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Haunts 5, Notoriety 3, Relic 3, Status 4

Passions: Guard the weak (Duty) 1, Refuse to succumb to Oblivion (Pride) 5

Arcanoi: Argos 2, Outrage 5, Moliat 4, Pandemonium 2

Fetters: Ruins of Krema II 4, the entire camp 1

Willpower: 9

Pathos: 10

Permanent Corpus: 12 (he's huge)

Shadow: The Monster

Angst: 9

Dark Passions: Brutalize all beneath you (Fear) 4, Send everyone to Oblivion (Rage) 4

Thorns: Death Sigil, Shadowed Face

Image: Ficzk is a classic Spook: lumpen, gnarled and impossibly huge. His head and upper body are one amorphous mound of ectoplasmic gristle, and his face still bears a deathmark-scar where it was split open. He wears Relic barbed wire about his arms and fists, having fashioned the wire into crude approximations of *cesti*. He is always charged with Pathos — even at the expense of other dybbuks — and so appears to crackle with ghostly vitality.

Roleplaying Hints: You prefer to speak in monosyllables and commands. The folk can do as they please, most of the time, unless you see that something needs to be done. If that happens,



you step in, and any who balk will learn that you can make their afterlives as miserable as their lives were.

Roza Robota

Background: Roza Robota had the misfortune to be a woman, a Polish Jew, and a hard-line Communist during the Nazi occupation. Nonetheless, through sheer determination, she clawed her way to respectable positions in the underground and the camp pecking order. Robota worked in Birkenau's *effektenlager* warehouses during the day and for the camp underground by night. Uncompromisingly political, she was an avid proponent of armed rebellion, and so when the plot involving the 12th Sonderkommando was formulated, she eagerly volunteered to help. With three other women, she managed to steal gunpowder and explosives from the factory where she worked. Roza personally undertook the dangerous mission of smuggling the weaponry to the Sonderkommando men, and neither electrified fences nor SS guards would be suffered to stand in her way.

The explosion of Krema IV was music more stirring than any Wagner symphony to her ears, and Roza rejoiced to see

the glorious uprising of the Sonderkommando. Of course, the plot was quashed, and the Political Department's ministrations coaxed Roza's name from captured participants. None of her connections could save her then. She and her accomplices were taken to Block 11, brutally tortured, and finally sentenced to be hanged. Her last word on the gallows was "*Nekama*" (Vengeance).

Roza fights for her ideals as best she may on this side of the Shroud. The Soviets' actions in Poland and the Balkans have eroded her faith in Communism, while constant vigilance against Sheol's Spectres is beginning to fray even her iron nerves. Her Angst tightens nightly about her, like an invisible noose, and she wonders whether she should just throw herself into the Tempest and give herself to the workers' parties down below.

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Architect

Triangle: *Partja*

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Expression 4, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Leadership 3, Melee 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Politics 3

Backgrounds: Memoriam 2, Status 3

Passions: Avenge Auschwitz's atrocities (Vengeance) 4, Support Socialism (Fervor) 2

Arcanoi: Keening 2, Outrage 4, Pandemonium 2, Puppetry 2

Fetters: Site of gallows 5

Willpower: 9

Pathos: 9

Permanent Corpus: 10

Shadow: The Abuser

Angst: 9

Thorns:

Shadow Passions: Sell out everyone in the camp to the Spectres (Vengeance) 3, Persecute tourists (Outrage) 3

Image: "Red Roza" is all planes and angles. Death has robbed her of what femininity life in Auschwitz left her, carving her into a granite haridan. The acrid sting of gunpowder drifts from her Corpus, and her head lolls drunkenly on her neck in remembrance of her hanging.

Roleplaying Hints: Vengeance. You have lived and died through it all, and you will suffer no one to intimidate or sway you. Deep down, a kernel of doubt gnaws at you, but for now you defy your Shadow as fervently as you defied the Nazis.

Joachim Steuben

Background: Clever Joachim. All the women on Lutherstrasse called him clever. Even his lovely Mutti praised him, when he returned from his nocturnal forays bearing morphine and filial devotion.

Mutti was not clever, no; Joachim could not say that of her, though he loved her so. She was not half so clever as that fine SR she tried to blackmail, and so Mutti was taken away and Joachim never saw her again and that was that.

Maybe it was for the best; after all, Lutherstrasse was not the place for *scheisskopfen*, even ones as beautiful as Mutti. And the young boys Joachim's age — the ones with cajoling ruby mouths and backs whip-scarred from the officers' nocturnal caresses — well, they were not half so clever as Joachim, or half so pretty as Mutti.

Poor fools. They needed guidance, which clever Joachim was happy to provide. In the Weimar's inflation-sodden economy, sex and lies were better currency than a wheelbarrow full of marks; and a murder or two, a couple of short prison terms and countless deals later, Joachim owned Lutherstrasse — the Doll Boys, the puffs, the cabarets. Soon it was known up and down the red-light district that Joachim Steuben was synonymous with trouble.

That lasted until the roundup came. The *polizei* were looking for trouble that day, and all of Joachim's cleverness couldn't get him out of that mess. So it was off to camp for clever Joachim.

Well, Joachim knew all about prisons, and the Lager wasn't half so bad, eh? A few cigarettes to the guard got that pretty young thing shuffled to the right, and into Joachim's barracks; and once clever Joachim had taught his pupil how to perform cleverly, well, then, cigarettes, vodka, meat and linen were his for the asking. A few more pretty *kinder* for the *Untermenschen* starvelings, and Joachim was living like a granary rat amid the booty of Europe's Jews.

The problem with syphilis, Joachim decided, is that it does not respect ambition or cunning. Clever Joachim lay on his back in the infirmary like all the other fools, and when the *doktor* rammed the phenol needle into Joachim's heart, his last thought was how much like Morphine Mutti he must appear.

What happened when Joachim crossed over in the midst of the Maelstrom is best left unrecorded, save that Joachim realized he wasn't half so clever as he'd imagined. But he was good enough for the Camp of the Dead, and so his new pimps sent him back to cruise the Shadowland streets the way he'd sauntered down the Lutherstrasse. Even Oblivion hadn't stripped Joachim of his ability to size up a relic or a Corpus, and soon he was one of Auschwitz's wealthiest "merchants." Now Joachim maintains Haunts in both the Puff and *Kanada*. A master Usurer, Steuben is little liked but greatly needed.

Nature: Pusher

Demeanor: Pusher

Caste: Doppelganger

Triangle: *Die Scheissgeistern*

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Leadership 2, Melee 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Finance 3, Investigation 2, Law 2, Linguistics 1

Arcanoi/Dark Arcanoi: Hive-Mind 1, Larceny 3, Moliat 2, Phantasm 3, Tempest-Weaving 4, Usury 5

Backgrounds: Notoriety 2, Relic 5

Dark Passions: Acquire things (Greed) 5, Acquire people (Insecurity) 5, Degrade "uptight" persons (Maternal Love) 4, Satisfy sexual cravings (Lust) 3

Fetters: Ground of camp brothel 1, Site of "*Kanada*" 2

Angst: 7

Psyche: The Agent

Composure: 1

Fronds: Indulgence, Wraith Prestige 1

Image: Joachim has Moliated himself extensively. He appears as a top-hatted, androgynous dandy, vaguely reminiscent of Marlene Dietrich in *Morocco*. A blond mane coils from under



the hat to his shoulders, and his elegant threads are “tailored” with barbed-wire “trim.” He is accompanied by a brace of his own personal Doll Boys, leashed to him by barbed-wire muzzles.

Roleplaying Hints: Even the damned have needs, and you’re here to provide them. Pole, Slovak; German, Jew; dybbuk, Spectre — who cares? Come in, sit down, and let Fritzi here warm you up with a little essence of lust distilled from the twitchy teenager staring stiff-legged at the photos of naked Gypsy children. Oh, what do you mean you’ll be late on the payment?

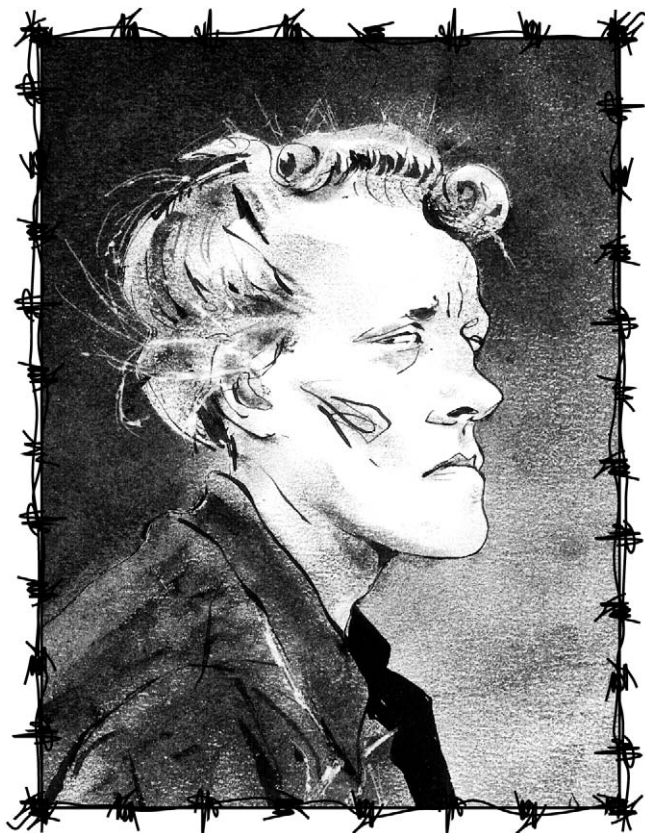
Malina Prmystleskza

Background: The past half-century has borne witness to several strange occurrences in which a Polish parent, roused from slumber by a ghostly cry, will find her infant in the throes of crib death, suffocating on a blanket, or suffering from some other woe ubiquitous to the newborn. In most cases, the parent is able to react in time to save the child — and indeed in a few instances, the hysterical parent performs the necessary resuscitative tasks with a mechanical precision, as though directed by an outside force. The parents never tell anyone of this marvel, just as they do not speak of the ghostly figure they see hovering over the crib. Most simply assume the apparition to be a hallucination, or an angel.

This “angel” is Malina Prmystleskza, in life a doctor practicing in a suburb of Cracow. Along with the rest of Cracow’s Jewish population, she suffered through the Nazi purges, being driven from her comfortable home to a squalid ghetto flat and finally into a cattle car on its way to Auschwitz. Her little Andrei and Danuta went up the chimney in short order; though she never saw her husband again, she heard he suffered the same fate.


Malina saved her sanity by employing her skills, treating minor wounds and otherwise insuring that some of the women on her block would not have to visit that abattoir the Reich dubbed a “hospital.” Mengele did not begrudge her the work, and even honored her by requesting her assistance on certain minor projects.

Then Teresa came to visit her. Teresa was thin and had been issued a shapeless sack five sizes too large for her, and so even Malina — and Mengele — had heretofore overlooked the fact that she was exceedingly pregnant. How she’d managed to carry the child to term on such a meager diet, Malina did not understand, but here she was with her water burst and crying out and — oh, didn’t she realize what Mengele did to pregnant women?



Well, the first thing Malina did was hush the poor goose up. (*If Mengele found out about this—!*) Then, with the aid of several bunkmates, she cleared a hiding place under one of the beds. Even the *blocowa* owed Malina favors — she had saved nearly everyone from the hospital — and so no one disturbed the block that night, not through all the hours of labor, not even when Teresa bit down hard on the blanket one last time and passed out as the child entered the world.

Malina’s practiced eye swept over the bloody baby, noting the chubby limbs, the shriveled little penis, the wet strands of hair, the 10 fingers, 10 toes and perfectly formed mouth. And then, before that mouth could open for its first breath, Malina, in perfect silence, gripped the infant by the throat. She squeezed with her right hand and cut the umbilical cord with the left, and then she plunged the infant into a bucket of water she had placed at her side. And still there was silence, broken only by the exhausted mother’s gasps and the feeble splashes of the tiny limbs. She held the newborn in the bucket until she felt his struggles cease. She looked all the attendants in the eye, and they stared back, and a deeper silence descended until Malina intoned, “The baby was stillborn.” Teresa would cry all night, and then she would go to work tomorrow, and Mengele would never know.



There were others after Teresa; some she saved, and some went to the gas to join their dead babies. Eventually Mengele ordered the liquidation of Malina's section and it was her turn to go. On the other side, her quiet courage gained her the respect of red and green alike, and Malina is one of the few completely trusted dybbuks in the camp.

That might be a mistake. Because sometimes, when Malina returns home from a mission of mercy, she chances to pass by one of Sheol's cracks; and reverberating from the depths, clearly audible even over the Miasma's eternal sigh, she hears the sounds of gurgling and splashing and singularly high-pitched cries. Often she thinks she hears Andrei and Danuta among the voices crying out, and always the sound draws closer.

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Caregiver

Triangle: None in particular

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 1, Empathy 3, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Crafts (midwifery) 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Medicine 4, Linguistics 2, Occult 2

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Eidolon 1, Haunts 5, Relic 2

Passions: Save children (Regret) 5, Atone for "mercy killings" (Guilt) 5

Arcanoi: Castigate 2, Embody 4, Molate 3, Keening 1, Puppetry 4

Fetters: Birkenau women's camp 3, photograph in distant family album 1

Willpower: 10

Pathos: 5

Permanent Corpus: 10

Shadow: The Martyr

Angst: 8

Thorns: Shadow Call

Shadow Passions: Harm children (Envy) 3, Make parents suffer (Revenge) 4, Join the Spectres of the dead infants (Guilt) 4

Image: Malina appears as a strong-boned woman with red hair going to gray and only the slightest bluish tinge from the Zyklon B that asphyxiated her. Her face radiates maternal concern, but if the situation demands it, her eyes can go cold and dead as a shark's.

Roleplaying Notes: You are an ectoplasmic pillar of strength for the dybbuks in your block. You are always ready to lend an incorporeal

helping hand or shoulder to lean on. Deep down, though, you wish someone would do the same for you. You're on the verge of Spectrehood, and when you go under, the whole camp may collapse.

Lexicon

appel — roll call

begrüssung — welcome

blocksperre — a command; when it was uttered, no prisoner was allowed to leave the barracks on pain of death

blocowa — block senior; the prisoner in charge of a given barracks

concentrationary — an older prisoner, one who "knew the ropes"

kapo — a "trustee" prisoner chosen to oversee and supervise the other prisoners

kommando — a work detail

lager — camp

organize — to obtain needed goods through barter or cleverness, without directly disenfranchising another prisoner

selektion — the process of picking prisoners to live or die according to their perceived health

zugang — new arrival

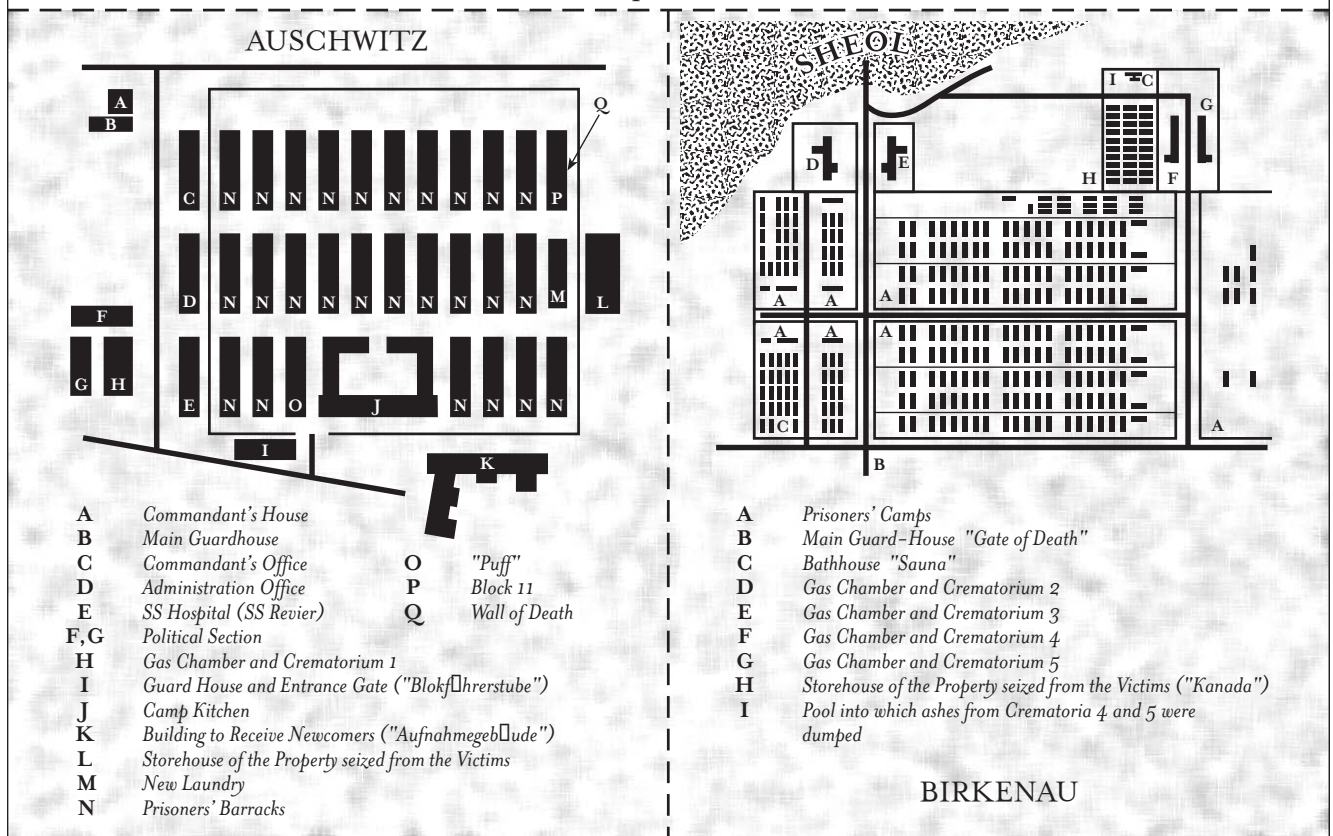
Zyklon B — a pesticide gas used to murder prisoners

Story/Chronicle Ideas

- The characters are former political prisoners who become enmeshed in the Skinland intrigues surrounding the newly liberated Warsaw Pact nations. By helping their Quick descendants to build stable, just governments — or at least ones different from the totalitarian regime that enslaved and murdered them — the characters may resolve their Passions and find peace. On the other hand, the Hierarchy may not look too kindly on such a breach of the *Dictum Mortuum*... and tensions between the Dark Kingdoms of Iron and Wire may flare into outright war.

- The characters are Heretics or other idealistic wraiths in search of Transcendence. At some point during a story, a Storyteller-controlled wraith beseeches the characters to admit him to their Circle, claiming a desperate desire for Transcendence.

Plan of the Concentration Camps Auschwitz & Birkenau (Brzezinka).



dence. The wraith proves exceedingly useful (with an uncanny amount of skill in the Moliate and Castigate Arcanoi) and seems very sincere.

Then, at some later point, an enraged Triangle of Auschwitz dybbuks surrounds the characters, demanding that they hand over their comrade. To the characters' shock, the dybbuks accuse their companion of being none other than the Restless incarnation of one of the camp guards at Auschwitz. Do the characters hand the wraith over or protect their comrade? How do the characters possibly justify forgiving their companion — especially to the dybbuks who suffered so much under his ministrations? Do the dybbuks resort to kidnapping the

wraith, forcing the characters to go behind the wire to rescue him? And, most importantly, is the wraith at the center of the conflict really a camp guard at all, an innocent caught in a web of mistaken identity or a cleverly disguised Doppelganger?

• The characters are Spectres, probably victims of the Birkenau Kremas, who inflict misery and terror on the Lager's wraiths and the surrounding countryside. This chronicle may prove to be exceedingly horrifying (and short); alternatively, the characters may gradually overcome their hate and rage, becoming wraiths and possibly even Transcending. Either option can provide an extremely harrowing and moving chronicle, but this idea is best used only with mature and sensitive players.

CHARNEL HOUSES OF EUROPE THE SHOAH™

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Charnel Houses of Europe: The Shoah is a serious look at the Holocaust and its legacy in the world of **Wraith: The Oblivion**. Inside is information on the Shadowlands during and after the Holocaust, as well as detailed setting material on Auschwitz, Babi Yar, Theresienstadt and the Warsaw Ghetto.

Charnel Houses of Europe: The Shoah contains:

- The history of the Holocaust in the World of Darkness;
- Information on the Dark Kingdom of Wire, the independent Necropoli of the Holocaust wraiths;
- Foreword by Janet Berliner, co-author of *Child of the Light* and *Child of the Journey* and the soon-to-be-released *Children of the Dusk*.

